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# THE RUBY CROSS



• MARY WALLACE •



Jack

Jack Reilly

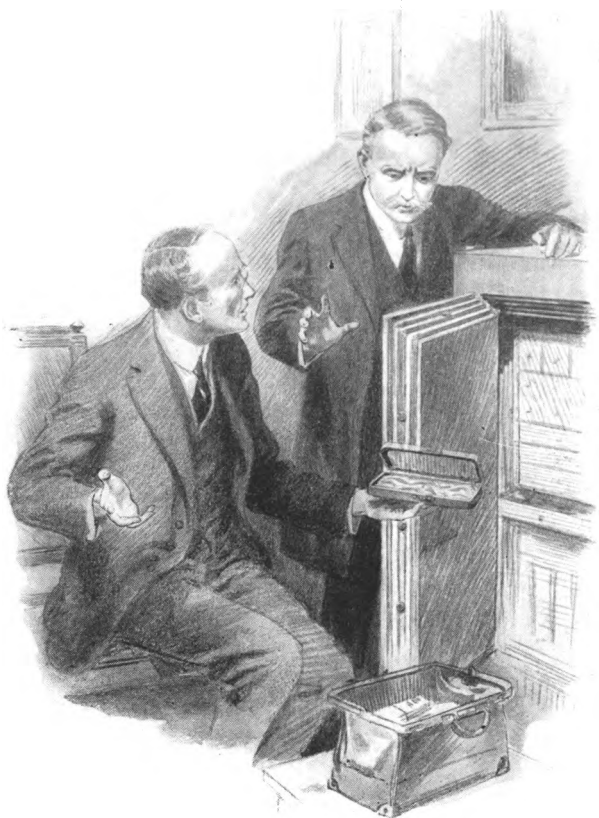
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## **THE RUBY CROSS**







"Mr. Howard lifted out the open case. It was empty."—  
*Page 194.*

# THE RUBY CROSS

*A NOVEL*

BY  
MARY WALLACE



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# THE RUBY CROSS

## CHAPTER I

### "MY LITTLE MISTRESS"

**A** ROBUST woman, middle-aged, and with a fine color in her dark face, walked briskly up the broad, well-kept gravel path that led to the palatial entrance of Beresford Court, the year-round residence of the well-known Luke Beresford—ex-Senator Beresford, retired some five years back, on account of the pressure of private duties, from the Supreme Court of the United States. Many people found it to their advantage to seek audience with the master of this beautiful place, whose genial accessibility was well known. He could be very lenient with those who had a just cause—lenient and charitable. But some, who sought his sympathy or assistance because of dishonesty or for a dishonest purpose, soon discovered the keen, sharp intellect behind the pleasant smile, and learned how brief and cutting

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might be his words of dismissal. Yet no one, worthy or unworthy, was ever turned away.

This woman with the dark eyes, as brilliant as they were observant, seemed almost suspicious. She glanced from side to side, and once over her shoulder, as if expecting to see a follower. When she finally touched the bell her hand was shaking noticeably, and when Jordan looked out—gray-haired Jordan, who, under special instructions from his master, allowed no one to answer that bell but himself—the woman was leaning against the stone pillar of the portico, and her face was white.

Jordan had seen the timid approach his master's door before this, and the woman looked respectable. So he waited, with a grave and kindly expression on his countenance, for the usual hesitating inquiry. He was rather astonished, then, when she asked, in a decidedly foreign tone:

"Is Miss Anne Holloway at home? I would like very much to see her."

Jordan's kindly expression changed a little.

"Miss Holloway? I do not know—I will find out for you. Will you give me your name, please?"

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"Miss Holloway does not know my name—it would do no good to give it. But tell her I must see her on important personal business."

Jordan bent his head, and opening a door at the side of the entrance-hall indicated that she could wait inside. As she passed him she gave him a frightened, pleading look, and her lips moved as if she were about to speak again. But she thought better of it. As Jordan turned toward the broad staircase a slim figure, enveloped in a long coat, appeared on the top step.

"A woman to see me? And she would not give her name? Where is she, Jordan?"

Jordan said something in a lower tone.

"Once before? That is strange. Well——"

The clear, mellow voice, with a deep note, like music, running through it, fell on intently listening ears. The woman stood in the center of the apartment, her eyes riveted on the door, which swung open to admit Anne Holloway. The girl unhooked her heavy coat and slipped out of it.

"You wished to see me, madam?" she began.

For a moment they stood looking into each other's faces, and Anne Holloway, clever and discerning, could see the honesty of the

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eyes that met her own. The woman put her hand to her throat:

"Yes, yes," she said. "You are Miss Holloway—Miss Anne Holloway?"

Anne bent her head.

"I am—my name is—Louise Duchard."

The name meant nothing to Anne. The girl continued to look at her, earnestly, searchingly.

"I am here to see you, *you!* I want so much that you should help me——" the words came out pantingly, the strong fingers clenched and unclenched nervously.

"Wait a minute," said Anne. "You are upset, agitated. Sit down—yes, I will listen to you, and help you if I can. You want assistance?"

"Not I—but some one—some one whom I love dearly."

"Your husband—your son?"

"Neither—I have neither. I am not married. It is my mistress, my sweet young mistress, who is so unfortunate as to be the wife of—David Beresford!"

She whispered the last two words. Anne Holloway started violently.

"You will have to speak more plainly," she said. "That is not my—I would not

care to interfere. Perhaps you had better see Judge Beresford——"

"Miss, miss!" pleaded the woman. "I will explain if you listen to me in patience. Mr. David's brother—the Judge—he thinks that the wife was wicked, oh, so wicked, and he pities him because he has spoiled his life in marrying so beneath him. My little mistress is not beneath him. Mr. David has said she was an actress; she was never on the stage in her life."

"Wait!" said Anne Holloway, quickly. "Have you come here to ask me to intercede for Mr. David's wife with the Judge? Don't be hurt, but I could not do that. I could not interfere in family affairs, especially in any of Mr. David's. If you want to see Judge Beresford——"

"No, no, no! I beg of you! It is not to intercede! It is to help me! It is to protect that poor, suffering wife and little helpless baby from that wicked, wicked man! That cruel creature, whom I—— Oh, miss, I am a Catholic, even as you . . . but I could find it in my heart to do him any injury."

"Listen, listen!" said Anne, quickly. "The Judge——"

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Tears of desperation gathered in the woman's dark eyes.

"Miss Holloway, the Judge will not listen. I came here once—that man to-day recognized me, I am sure—" Anne nodded, for Jordan had indeed spoken of her previous visit—"and another time I met him—the Judge, I mean—on the road to the station. Both times he disregarded all, every word, and the last time he threatened me with arrest. Letters I have sent—three of them—but no answer came, ever!"

Anne Holloway drew her chair close to that of the now almost hysterical woman.

"Don't cry," she said, in her kind tones, "don't cry. Tell me all, and if there is a way to help, we'll find it."

"I know you will—you are good, good!" said the woman. "Good! That is why I came. Mr. David spoke of you always as the saint. 'Anne, the saint,' he called you, telling us how much you hated him."

"I do not hate him," said Anne Holloway.

"But you despise——"

Anne shook her head.

"Please—you will not go into my feelings," she said. "You want to tell me a story? Are you sure I can help you?"

**"If you do not help, all is lost."**

**"Well, then."**

**"My little mistress' father was at one time a great circus performer and that is how it came that people say she is an actress. He was a very foolish man, his worst foolishness being that he invested in every scheme which seemed good for making money. He had piles and piles of such things, shares and so on, in his house, and always pretended to be a man of wealth. He did so pretend to this Mr. David Beresford, else he might not have been in such a hurry to wed with my little mistress. He knew her but two weeks and she was carried away with that face, and those manners which make a woman feel as if she were a princess! Faugh!"**

**Anne Holloway made no comment.**

**"But, miss, the father had no wealth. He was not even rich. Monsieur Beresford went stark mad when he found it out. He stayed with his wife a few months more. The father died, and to his daughter came such a small sum of money, and this stack of useless, useless paper! Think! Monsieur Beresford went away then, and did not return. My little mistress fretted—the child was coming. But I told her not to fret—the little one would make up for all.**

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"It did, miss. It was such a pretty baby—oh, so pretty! She is more lovely now. But listen. One day we read in the papers about some mine that was no good, and that now it is good, and the shares worth, oh so much money! My little mistress smiled, and said, 'It would not be the father's luck to have those shares!' I did not know—I said I will look—it does no harm to look! And, miss, I find them! Hundreds and hundreds, and when we count up it is so much money and my mistress is ever so rich. Whom shall we go to with those shares? Before we know, David Beresford he walks in. Without one word he walks in. He tells us he knows we have shares—good shares—there and that he wants them. My little mistress never gets angry, but then she did, and flings at him that one penny of them he shall never touch. They are for Lolita."

"Lolita? The baby?" asked Anne.

"Yes—the baby. 'So! Lolita,' he says. He picks up the baby in his arms. 'Well, then, I take her. When you give me the shares for my own you may have Lolita.'"

A little cry of amazement escaped Anne's lips.

"It is terrible, is it not? But he could not get away like that. I am strong—like a

man, almost. My mistress screamed, just once, in terror, and fell, but I—well, he did not take the baby. I can see his face yet—" Her fingers worked. "Black, with the eyes almost starting from his head! And then I opened the door and thrust him out and locked it on him and sat down and cried over my two helpless ones. Alas! But David Beresford did not try to come in again that day. I was like one gone mad, and I could have done him much hurt. He is a villain!"

A grim expression seemed to change her whole face. It was hard and bitter now.

"Then I said, 'we must go where he can not find us.' So we went from place to place, but he came each time. I thought of seeing some lawyer about the shares, and I then take my little mistress far, far away to my own country, to France, to my own village, where I was born, and where we could be safe forever. But now," a sob broke in her throat, "I can not do this, even. She is almost crazed. I can do nothing—nothing at all. With one arm about her child and holding in the other those dreadful shares, she would sit all day, until I coax her to let the little one come to me. And if she sees a shadow, or hears a noise, she is screaming, screaming. It can not last!"

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"Poor girl!" said Anne. "Poor, poor girl!" She thought a moment. "Where are you now?"

"That is the story, Miss Anne. I am quite close—so close! In Avona, the village so near to here. There are some good French people who would help me. I knew they would be true to my little mistress, and I wished to be near to Judge Luke Beresford, who is so noble, so fine, every one says—and to you, Miss Anne. If anything happened I would be near to real help."

"But you are quite close to Mr. David Beresford, too," said Anne.

"Ah! He has not found us this time—not now, for almost three months! And I listen, I ask, I watch! I know that he is gone to the city before I come. It is a chance—I have waited for it long."

"If you told this story to Judge——"

"No, no! I have tried twice—I have written three times! There is some one who gives those letters to Monsieur David. I feel it."

"How can that be?" said Anne, under her breath. "The Judge's private letters? No one would dare tamper with them. But tell me—did Judge Beresford hear anything—anything of this——"

## "MY LITTLE MISTRESS" 17

"No, Miss Anne. He believes so in his brother—and can one blame him? Who could think he was so—so—— You see, miss, it is all true. As soon as I spoke of Mr. David's wife he rang the bell that I should go away, and would hear no more "

"So you thought of me?"

"Not then—I was afraid. But I heard so much in Avona of Miss Anne, 'the proud Miss Anne,' they call you, but with love, love! I can not see that you are proud," went on the woman; "there is no pride in your face—only just what my little mistress needs—gentleness, and affection, and sympathy. Not from me, but from one of her own kind. You are that. She is of good blood, as you will observe, and if you could win her confidence, and make her see right once more——"

"I will think it all over," said Anne, thoughtfully. "And I will go to you and her—once at least. Be sure that, if there is no other way, Judge Beresford will learn the truth—but I must know it *is* the truth." She smiled winningly, and looked straight into the woman's eyes. "Will you trust me?"

"I could trust you with my life," said the woman, earnestly. "And my little mistress

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—and my baby! Oh, Miss Anne, Miss Anne——”

They were interrupted. A hand was laid on the knob, and a voice reached them.

“Miss Anne is in here, you say, Jordan? Engaged? Oh, that is all right. I shall not detain her a moment. Anne, where are you?”

Anne had risen and stood between her visitor and the door, as it was flung open, and a young man stood upon the threshold. But if she thought to screen the woman from view she was disappointed, for David Beresford walked deliberately close to her and looked over her shoulder into Louise Duchard's agitated countenance. There was an instant's silence. Then he turned to Anne without a sign of any emotion on his face.

“Got home a day earlier, Anne, and I have some business to settle with Luke at once. Has he gone out?”

“I do not know,” said Anne. She was quite calm. “Mr. Howard was with him all morning. They are probably in the library.”

“They're not—I looked. Howard here still!” The news was evidently unpleasant, for the young man caught his lip between his teeth, a habit he had when annoyed. He

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did not glance again at the woman, who now had her back turned toward him, nor had he betrayed any sign of recognition. "Any idea what it is all about?"

"Not the slightest."

"Well, I'll look for him again. I hope I haven't interrupted you?"

"Oh, no, David. Mademoiselle Duchard is going now."

Her smooth, noncommittal voice was almost maddening to the man, had she but known it. Perhaps she did. He went out and closed the door behind him. Louise Duchard turned to Anne with a ghastly countenance, every nerve in her body quivering.

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do? All is lost! He has seen me! He will follow!"

"Wait!" said Anne. "Where is your place? Tell me the name of the people."

"We live in the last cottage on Temple Street. Lafarge is the name. My mistress is known as Madame Laurot."

Anne pulled her watch from her belt.

"Ten minutes from now the local for New York touches Beresford—our station. Have you money?"

"Yes, miss, enough."

"Fly, then, and get that train. Reach the station, all excited, you understand? Ask Mr. Vale—that is the station-master—if the train has come, and act so that your haste and agitation will be commented upon. Get into the last car, and get off when you reach Deepdale. The walk back to Avona is six and a half miles. Walk it, however—do not risk a carriage."

"Gladly, gladly! Oh, you are so good, so clever, so kind! I see, I see!"

"I shall keep Mr. David long enough to let you get that train. I do not know how I can do it, but I shall. Come now! Have courage! I am going to help you and your little mistress and your baby."

The woman grasped her hand and kissed it. Then she fell to the floor, and taking up her dress, pressed her lips to it passionately. A deep flush crept into Anne's face.

"Don't do that! Please!" she said.

"I can not help it! It is the first break in the dark clouds above us, Miss Anne. I thank you, thank you!"

"I shall go with you to the door. Remember now. Good-by. Courage!"

The sweet smile that accompanied this last word brought the tears in a blinding rush to the woman's eyes. Jordan was waiting, and

Anne looked at him with meaning in her glance as he let the visitor out. Then Anne turned at once and ran lightly up the stairs, tapping at the door of a small room which they called the study, and in which Judge Beresford transacted most of his business affairs, as every one in the house, including David Beresford, knew. Judge Beresford and a short, stout man were seated at a table, and the room was filled with cigar smoke.

"David has just come in, Judge Beresford," said Anne. "Do you want to see him?"

"Thank you, Anne, yes." He leaned over and touched a bell. Anne left the room.

"Mr. David is somewhere about," said the Judge to the servant who answered. "Ask him to step here a moment."

"Very well, sir."

The man went downstairs.

"Mr. David?" asked Jordan. "He has just gone. There he is at the gate. You can catch him if you hurry."

The young fellow was active, and an excellent runner—for which fact David Beresford did not feel like blessing him just then. He reached him quite out of breath.

"Mr. David, the Judge wants to see you at once in his study, sir."

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"Oh!" said David Beresford. He slipped his hand into his pocket suggestively. "Perhaps you were not able to overtake me?" he asked.

"I would not have caught you, sir, but Jordan is out on the portico looking right at us," said the man, lowering his voice.

"Hang it!" said David Beresford, in a disagreeable tone. "I suppose that settles it. But the next time don't be in quite such a hurry. Let that be understood."

With very bad grace David Beresford turned back toward the house.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CROSS

**T**HE room which he entered was furnished and decorated in keeping with the rest of Beresford. It had the high, beamed ceilings, paneled walls, and soft rugs, but there was, withal, an air of austerity about it that proclaimed a predominating masculine element. The ornaments were scanty, the paintings mainly of historical scenes. A few low bookcases held substantial looking volumes, while the polished table in the center of the room, broad and massive, seemed built for service. The huge iron safe standing in the alcove gave the business keynote to the whole apartment. True, the silken drapery had been expressly designed to conceal it, but the folds were seldom drawn, for Luke Beresford spent many hours of the day here.

He sat at the table now, a distinguished-looking man, with kindly dark eyes, and a mass of iron-gray hair. Beside him was a man no older than he in years, but widely

different in type—the practical, sharp, keen man of affairs—nor did his looks belie him, for Lawyer Howard was a thorough-going worker. There was a frown between Judge Beresford's eyes, as he turned, with papers in hand, to meet the glance of his brother. And, as always, when he looked at him, the frown disappeared. Careless, indifferent, gay of mien and of speech, David Beresford exercised the greatest influence over the older man, who loved him dearly.

"How do you do, David?" he said. "I'm very glad you happened to come in to-day. Mr. Howard——"

"It was Mr. Howard that brought me here," said David, smiling and nodding at that gentleman, who, however, did not seem so cordial in his greeting.

"Among the valuables and the packages of securities which you turned over to Mr. Howard on the tenth of the month, David," began the Judge, "and that is now two weeks ago, there is no mention made of the Beresford cross. Mr. Howard is positive he did not receive it——"

"Mr. Howard is right," said David Beresford, lightly. A smile touched his handsome mouth. He approached the table and

putting his hand in his pocket drew out an old-fashioned black morocco case. "Mr. Howard is right, and I must apologize. I called at his office this morning, and was quite disappointed at not finding him there. You see, I'd been telling Johnson and Waring about the cross and the old prophecy, and when I left the rest of the stuff with him I kept this out to show them. I showed it and had it locked up in the safe——"

"What safe?"

"At the Amsterdam."

"David, how could you be so careless? The priceless Beresford cross in a hotel safe!"

"Oh, it was all right, Luke. The Amsterdam people are O. K."

"Of course they are—I'm not saying anything about the Amsterdam people. But to do a thing of that sort! Forgot all about it, I presume?"

"Absolutely, sir."

Judge Beresford shook his head.

"I suppose we'll have to put up with it, seeing it's you, David, but if anything had happened to that——" He unclasped the case as he spoke, and the beautiful Beresford cross glowed like crimson fire on a bed of

yellowed velvet. "Wonderful thing, isn't it, Howard? I don't believe there are finer stones in the world."

"I daresay not, Judge," said Mr. Howard. "Permit me, please?" He took it in his hand and scrutinized it carefully. "The setting is very odd, isn't it? Of course, I have seen it before, but each time it strikes me as being peculiar."

"Crude, some might say, until one grasped the fine lines of the thing. But you can't really get at the whole beauty of it unless you use a magnifier. Glance through this, Howard."

He handed a glass to the lawyer.

"Wonderful, indeed!" he exclaimed. "I am not surprised that you prize it highly." He gave it back to him. "Better store it away safely, Judge."

"Oh, yes! I'll hold on to it, now—and you can take it with you in the morning. I'll slip it into the little compartment here." He shut the case and, rising, went toward the open safe. "You're forgiven, David, but I'll see that it doesn't happen again."

David laughed.

"I'm glad it's off my mind. It gave me a bad half hour when I found I had forgotten

it, and then discovered that Howard was down. I had no idea what you might think—so caught the next train. In my anxiety I overlooked the fact that it passed our station, so I had to get off at Deepdale and walk up.”

“Then, since walking is such a penance for you, I absolve you from all further blame,” laughed his brother.

David went out smiling, but the smile did not remain on his lips any longer than it took him to close the door.

“I can’t say that I approve of your leniency,” said Mr. Howard, a little grimly. “But since no harm is done——”

“That’s it.” There was an eager note in Judge Beresford’s voice. “I don’t want to be hard on David if I can avoid it.”

“I understand,” said Howard. “And it doesn’t worry me half as much as it would if it weren’t for Neil.”

“Yes, Neil will own Beresford,” said the Judge. “Of course, we’ll take good care of David, but Neil is the future master. He’s a good little chap, Howard.”

“For which you can thank Anne Holloway.”

“Anne Holloway!” The Judge smiled

almost tenderly. "Proud Anne! I have more than that for which to thank Anne Holloway!"

The young lady of whom they spoke had just turned into the library on the opposite side of the lower hall, and David Beresford, catching sight of her as he came down the stairs, followed her.

"How are things?" he asked, carelessly. "How's Mistress Mollie and Rosalie?"

"Both well, David."

"And Neil?"

"Splendid."

"Who was that funny old pensioner you had out in the grill-box with you?" It was David's name for the little room where Judge Beresford saw many who called on him. "She looked as if she came from the ark."

Anne thought of the neat, trim, prepossessing woman and mentally apologized.

"Not being acquainted with ark fashions——" she began, laughing, as she slipped up the glass door of one of the bookcases, and scrutinized the volumes. "But you'd be astonished if you knew what she came here to tell me."

"What, Anne?"

"Oh, David, don't be ridiculous! You know who she was as well as I do."

He looked up. She was staring intently at the book before her. He crossed the room to her side.

"Perhaps I do, Anne. Better than you do. Tell me what she said to you."

"She wanted—she has tried to see the Judge several times. She thought I could help her. I was very glad you came in when you did."

"And is that all?" he asked.

"No, David—she was evidently very much afraid to talk. She wants me to see her at her own home—to see your——"

Anne broke off abruptly. She felt, rather than saw, the quiver of excitement that shot across his face.

"I will not interfere in your affairs, David," she said, almost angrily, then. "Nor shall I bother the Judge with them. You need not be the least afraid that I shall make any trouble for you or about you."

"I—I am not afraid, Anne," he said, in a low tune. "Not of you, girl. No, nor of any one, if it comes to that. Anne, are you going to see these people?"

Anne shook her head.

"No. I suppose I'm well able to take care of myself, but still——"

"You're so well-known around here that you needn't be afraid to go anywhere——"

"That isn't it," said Anne. "That's the trouble. If it *were* about here—— But I'm talking foolishly now," she went on. "You know as much about them as I do, and I certainly have enough responsibilities on my hands without getting mixed up in a business that is no concern of mine. Don't you worry, David." She laughed at him as she tucked the book she had chosen under her arm, and turned from the bookcase. "It's six of one and a half-dozen of the other, or I'm not a good judge of character!"

"That isn't at all flattering to me, Anne. I wish you would go and see for yourself. Perhaps you wouldn't be so hard on me, then."

"Oh, well! Most of us have to pay for our mistakes, and suffer for our faults. Your greatest one, you know, is kindness. I suppose you can't help yourself."

"I don't think I deserve a speech like that from you, Anne."

Anne began to laugh.

"You mean you don't like to hear it from me. Let me change it then, David. You are very popular, and one contracts a certain debt for popularity. I don't know the right or wrong of your story, but I know *you*, David, and I don't think the wrong is all on the other side. No one can settle the question for you, but your two selves. Your wife—and yourself."

She spoke with a contemptuous note of finality in her voice.

"And as for annoying Judge Beresford—I think he has been and is being sufficiently annoyed."

"You certainly don't spare a fellow, Anne. But it is good for me; I like it. I think I could be a better man if you talked to me oftener."

Anne threw back her head, and laughed until the tears came into her eyes. "David!" she said. "O David, what a joke you are!" She turned toward the door.

"Anne," he said, "before you go—would you mind telling me a little more? Where can I find her?"

"I didn't write it down, David—on purpose. Are you still afraid that I am going

to interfere? Downing Avenue—Downing Street—is there a name of that sort on the upper west side of the city?”

“The city? Why, I don’t know. I’ve never heard it before. I’ll try to find it.”

Anne bent her head without replying, and passed out of the room. David Beresford stood as she left him.

“If it weren’t, Anne! But Anne is so transparent, and so hot-tempered, and if Louise told her all, she could not have kept it to herself; she’d be too anxious to lash me! Confound that donkey Harkins! If he hadn’t caught me I could have followed and found out. But I’ll soon discover whether Anne is lying or not. Louise will have to go to Beresford station, unless she had the wit to walk to Deepdale and get the train there. Heavens, if I have escaped this time I shall begin to believe my lucky star is permanently in the ascendant.”

He stood meditating an instant, chewing the end of his small light-brown mustache, one shapely hand bearing his weight as he leaned on the table, and a frown between his eyebrows that made the likeness between him and his brother quite remarkable at that moment, in spite of the disparity of their

years. And then there came the sound of a girlish voice behind him humming a merry tune.

"Why, it's David!" Rosalie Walcott stopped in amazement.

"When did you get home?" she continued, but she could not keep back the pleasure from voice or eyes. "I thought this last deal, as you called it, was going to occupy the most of your time for the next fortnight."

"What sarcastic emphasis you place on the word 'deal,' " said Beresford, in a slightly nettled tone.

"Do I? And it's such a perfectly good word, too!"

"For heaven's sake, Rosalie, don't you begin! I have enough to think about as it is."

"I suppose so. Well, I sha'n't disturb you. Let me see . . . I'm looking for the second volume of 'Vanity Fair.' There you are! I'll see you at luncheon, David."

"Wait, wait!" said David Beresford. "Why are you going off in such a hurry? I think you might at least say you're glad to see me."

"I won't say it, then." She laughed at

him, her lovely little face sparkling. "After all, though, I should; it will really be a relief to have some one here even to quarrel with. Oh, this house, this house!" She sprang up on the edge of the long polished table, and looked across at him, her face the merry, laughing one of a spoiled child. "If it doesn't make one want to die for lack of something to do!"

David Beresford laughed in response.

"Anne doesn't improve any, then?"

"Not a bit!" She put up her hand to conceal a yawn. "What real, *real* pleasure there is in life! And then think of these small, small dinners, these formal receptions! They pall, don't they? Uncle Luke knows more genuine antiques, men and women, than any other person in the world! I had some hopes when Dr. Holmes came along, but he finds life just as serious a proposition! O dear!" She began to laugh merrily. "I shall be glad when I can get to the Birdsalls—if ever! They have gone to Aiken for the winter and I have hopes of persuading Uncle Luke to let me off to England with them later."

"You little flyaway!" said David Beres-

ford. "What will Beresford Court do without you?"

"Yes! What will it do? And *oh*, what shall *I* do without Beresford Court!" She rolled her eyes tragically. "Did you know, sir—prepare for a shock—that Dr. Holmes and—Anne——"

She raised her eyebrows.

"Dr. Holmes and Anne!" David Beresford stared incredulously. "Anne and Dr. Holmes? Impossible."

Rosalie Walcott turned her light head on one side.

"Why?" she asked. "Why so impossible?"

"You are far more attractive than Anne," he answered readily.

"Oh!" Rosalie laughed again—a merry peal. "I might have known—how foolish of me to give you that chance! But you can't help it, David—that is your way." She was silent a moment. "David, can you picture me married to Maurice Holmes! Now, can you?"

He leaned across the table, and his eyes met hers. At the expression in them the color surged across her cheeks.

"No, Rosalie," he said. "I can't picture you married to Maurice Holmes or to any other man. You are too good for any of us."

"David, dear," she answered, serenely, "I rather thought you had grown perfect in the art of talking much and saying nothing. Perhaps I am forced to notice a new polish, as it were, because you have been away from us more than the average two or three days. I am overwhelmed!"

She nodded mockingly, sprang down from the table, and left the room.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BROTHERS

**L**UKE, I want some money.” Judge Beresford glanced up from the letter he was writing.

“I’m not surprised at that,” he said. “You’ve done well this month—made the regular allowance fit three weeks instead of the usual three days. How did it happen, David?”

“What? After the last lecture you gave me?” David made a wry face. “I’m not anxious for another like that in a hurry. Still——” he paused, a meaning pause, one that he meant to convey more than speech to the grave man seated at the table, who now laid down his pen, and stared at him with eyes which had lost every suspicion of the merry banter with which he had opened the conversation.

“What is it, David?”

“Nothing.”

“David, are you in any fresh mischief?”

"Will the prodigal ever mend his ways?" David threw back his head with a laugh that was almost a sneer. "No. I am too busy with my old scrapes to find time to get into any new ones."

The Judge stroked his mustache.

"What old scrape now?"

"There are so many of them," mocked David. He was silent a few moments. "Luke," he began then, in a choked voice, "can't I persuade you to let me talk to Howard about that—about myself? I want to get rid of this terrible incubus which is weighing me to the earth," he went on passionately, "this millstone which is hanging about my neck."

"You mean, of course——"

"I want to file papers in a divorce suit."

Judge Beresford looked at him a little wearily.

"Still harping on that one string, David?"

David Beresford's mouth set grimly.

"If you knew—if you had any feeling——"

"Any feeling?" echoed Judge Beresford.

"Don't take that line. I know everything you would say—everything. I have no doubt but that your wife is a thoroughly

wicked creature, poor thing! I'm sorry for every woman of her sort in the world. But you, a Beresford, to marry a third-rate actress! You tied her about your own neck—you forged your own fetters! And I, also a Beresford, do not believe in and will not countenance divorce. I am not a Catholic, but the inviolability of the marriage bond is the great thing which appeals to me in that faith. A marriage is a marriage, forever, until death frees you, or frees her."

David Beresford's face was white with passion.

"That is Anne's talk," he sneered. "She is Catholic enough, if you like, to impress her sentiments on others——"

"That will do," said Judge Beresford, sternly now. "We won't bring Anne into this discussion. There is another reason just as strong as my belief in the marriage bond—and that reason is the honor of the Beresfords. We've come of an old stock, my boy, a good old stock. We can't afford to drag our name through any disgraceful legal proceedings. We can't afford to let any one know that there is a person bearing the Beresford name whose conduct is a blot upon it. Even if we are aware of the fact

that she is wicked, it must be hidden in our own family."

"Then you'll have to pay to hide it!" said David Beresford.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. Do you think it is costing me nothing—nothing?"

"But she gave her word when you settled that bulk sum——"

"Gave her word!" Again David Beresford laughed. "Yes, and she would give her word again. Luke, I am being driven mad—and if I can not tell *you*, appeal to *you*, especially now——" He dropped his head on the table. A quiver of pity shot across Luke Beresford's face. He got up, crossed the room, and put his hand tenderly on the younger man's shoulder.

"What else is there to tell, David?" he said, very gently. "Oh, David, I am sorry for you, deeply sorry, but we have the future of our house to look out for. My boy's life is all before him—there must be no shadow of any disgrace upon his family. The name came to us without dishonor—we must pass it on to Neil without dishonor, also. Do you not see the justice of it?"

"These things can be done quietly—no

one need ever know. Divorce! What is divorce nowadays?" David's voice rang out in sudden anger, as he shook off his brother's hand. "And then—I shall not stay here. I am not anxious to stay here. We—I—will go away—far away."

"*We* will go? What do you mean?" There was a note of suspicion in the older man's sharp tones. "There is some one else—there is another woman! This is bad business, David, bad business."

"Do you think I am a fool!" cried David Beresford, bitterly. "Do you think I would ever give another woman a word—insult her even by a compliment, no matter how much I was attracted by her? Nevertheless, I *have* met the woman I could wed with honor to our house. Do you wonder now that, feeling as I do, I can not agree with your quixotic notions in regard to divorce? That I can not see why you should not even help me? There are ways and means to help me. You, with your legal knowledge, your influence, could have it done in such a manner that no one need ever learn——"

"Hush, hush!" said Judge Beresford quickly. He began to pace up and down the room. "David, if you only knew, if you

only knew—how my heart is torn between my affection and my idea of justice! David, David, you have been a sore trial to me!”

“I know it,” said David, in an altered tone. “Forgive me, Luke. We are as far apart, you and I, as the two poles. I can not help my nature any more than you can help yours.”

“You will say I am spoiling your life,” said Judge Beresford bitterly. “Yes, you will say that, without realizing that it is my conscience as well as my honor which is in arms against you. Truly, indeed, I might have this thing done, and none need ever know it—but myself and you, and a very few others. And yet in my eyes no law of the State can untie the marriage bond. That has always been my contention, even when, legally, I had to acquiesce in the administering of the law. Therefore, though you wedded the first and finest lady in this land after your divorce, I could not look upon your union as anything but one outside the pale of respectability.”

David Beresford waved his hand impatiently, but Judge Beresford paid no heed to the movement.

“We will let things go on as they are—at

least until I can no longer have any influence over you. You will feel that your life is spoiled, yes. Perhaps it is. But, my brother, dearly as I love you, I am not blind. The spoiling has been done by yourself, and were you free to-morrow the same thing could occur." He sat down at his desk. His agitation of the moment before completely vanished. "You say the woman is tormenting you, bleeding you, I suppose. We shall have to do something about it, but we will go into that later. At present, if I double next month's allowance—you may be able to do something with it? It will help temporarily, at least?" He spoke inquiringly, his checkbook open before him.

"Oh, double it by all means," said David carelessly, "for being a good boy! Perhaps you think you can always keep me the good boy by holding the purse-strings?"

He was angry. His brother's plain speaking had nettled him. The Judge did not speak until he had filled out, signed, and blotted the slip of paper.

"David," he said, then, "no one is compelling you to act the 'good boy.' You're a man. The sooner you realize that, the better. Why it is that you are satisfied to lead

the idle life you do has always been a puzzle to me. At any rate, nearly a thousand dollars a month is sufficient to provide the necessities of existence for any man who will not work."

David Beresford sat up quickly, and gave his brother a keen, sharp, scrutinizing glance. It had been a good while since Luke spoke to him in such absolutely unqualified terms. Had he heard? Could Anne——?

"I at least, am entitled to my share—we happened to have the same father," he said, as insolently as he dared.

"When I die the just half of our father's estate will be yours to do with as you like—to spend or save, as pleases you. And Neil's—which is mine—will be so effectually disposed of, David, that there will be no chance of your coming in later for that which does not belong to you. You will not find any shrinkage when we arrive at the final accounting," went on the older man, smiling a little. "And you could have all that will be yours for the asking if I did not know that in your present attitude of mind it would do you more harm than good. Let us not talk of this further, David. But," he continued, in a voice he tried to make even

and noncommittal, "Howard spoke of something to-day that interested me very much." He leaned back in his chair, and twirled the pen in his fingers without looking at his brother. "There is an opening with Jenkins & Harmon. Jenkins is retiring. Would you enter that office as junior partner?"

David Beresford stared questioningly at him a moment. He knew well the thoughts that were passing in his brother's mind—the Judge expected that he would reject the offer at once, without qualification. And, indeed, the younger man's first impulse was to burst out laughing, so preposterous it seemed. But he did not laugh, nor, for the moment, say a word. Instead he turned his eyes to the window, and looked out across the green lacery of leaves to the clouds that rested like snow against the deep blue of the October sky. No man knew better than David Beresford where his feet were set, but he had so long regarded Luke as his never-failing providence that the thought had given him no uneasiness. He traveled—was traveling—a dangerous road. He was idle, and the vices of the gilded youth of his acquaintance appealed to him. He was a

liar and a hypocrite. He had married little Norma Charteris because he believed her the heiress of great wealth. He had cast her off as easily when he found out she had nothing. He had a growing passion for gambling, which was fastening its clutches deeper and deeper upon him, a passion of which Luke Beresford was in total ignorance. All these things went through his mind quickly. Could he redeem himself? Could he come back, ever, to the even tenor of Beresford ways and days?

"There is the chance to make a man of yourself," said Judge Beresford. "You'll have every opportunity, for Harmon will do all in his power for you. You're young—so young that ten years from now the memory of your one mistake will only serve as a warning, and your life will still be before you. David, I feel toward you as I do toward Neil. I want everything for your good. You need discipline, you need work. Wake up, lad, wake up!"

But still David did not answer. Judge Beresford looked at him with keen anxiety on his face. Presently David's eyes met his across the table.

"What's the use, Luke?" he said. "I

have no business head. It would be mighty unfair to Harmon to saddle him with such a partner."

"It isn't a thing you can afford to miss—it will not come again," said the Judge.

"When must I decide?"

"Now—at once."

"Luke, I can't—not so quickly as all that. Give me a day, at least—let me thresh the thing out with myself."

"Howard wanted to take back an answer to-morrow. Jenkins leaves in a month—he's going South permanently. A month is a very short while in which to learn the ins and outs of such a business."

"Howard expects yes or no, then?"

"Decidedly."

"Supposing you tell him I will see Harmon myself? I'm going back to town this afternoon, and I'll run in on him to-morrow."

Judge Beresford gave a sigh of relief; there seemed something more promising in that remark than the hesitation of the previous speech.

"Surely there is nothing else?" he said anxiously. "Nothing that would keep you from adopting this plan—settle you in life

—really help to make a man of you? I'm well aware that you've been foolish, perhaps worse. But I give you my word now that no matter what you have done, I'll get you out of it. No matter what the cost, I'll pay it, and start you clear and free on the road that I know will be to your greatest benefit. Confide in me, David, and you shall not hear a single reproach——”

David laughed lightly, and sprang up from the chair.

“You'd make me well ashamed of myself if there was anything, Luke,” he said. “But you are acquainted with all my wickedness now. You'd have a better opinion of me, perhaps, if I hadn't been quite so open and above-board with you. Yes, you know all—the very worst, and I have no more to tell.” He went toward the door. “I'll catch the three o'clock train——”

“Your check, David.”

“Oh! The check? Have you any money handy? I'd rather you gave me the money.”

Judge Beresford went toward the safe, and took out an iron box, on top of which lay the morocco case containing the ruby cross. As he put the case on the table David picked it up in his hands.

"Confess," he said, laughingly. "This is the real reason why you have been so hard on me—you were afraid something had happened to the heirloom."

"I was worried," said his brother, as he began counting out some money from the box. "I did not know what to think. I hate to distrust you, David, but that thing is so priceless, and you are reckless. But it was only worry, after all. Down deep at the bottom of my heart I knew everything was all right."

"Thank you!" There was a mocking light in the handsome eyes. "You feared the worst, until you were convinced it hadn't happened."

Judge Beresford did not reply to this; it was too true. And yet he was ashamed of the suspicions that had fastened on him like leeches when Mr. Howard brought his statement, and the precious cross was missing.

"I'll see you again before you go?" he said, as he handed the money to David. "I'll have to give you a check for some of it—I haven't enough here."

"I'll put in my head to say good-by. I haven't had two words with Mistress Mollie, and I'm anxious for a chat. One can't say

much at a luncheon-table with strangers present, but it struck me she was looking well, indeed."

"She is, she is," said Judge Beresford. "And feeling just as well, I'm glad to say."

"You think Holmes is helping her then?"

"I know it; he's chock-full of sound common sense. After that last turn of Mollie's I resolved we'd send all the other fellows off about their business. It seems lucky we did, now."

"Very lucky," assented David. Then he went out, and closed the door behind him.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROPHECY

**T**HE older man stood at the table, one hand resting upon it, staring down at the little black case, a worried line between his eyes. Any talk with David always worried him.

"Thank God he is honest, at least—but I must have been mad to suspect such a thing! It just shows how far one can go when he lets his suspicions run away with him. I wonder if it was Howard's manner that made it seem possible. Heavens, I had a bad morning of it!"

Some one was knocking at the door.

"Come in!" he called, cheerfully. "Oh, is it you, Mollie? Have you been for your ride?"

"I'm going as soon as Anne comes down," was the answer. A slender little woman entered the room. Her hair was snow-white, and her face, in spite of its pallor, showed signs of great beauty. This was Mrs. Beres-

ford, Luke Beresford's wife, and the mother of Neil Beresford, the ten-year-old son and heir. "What is that on the table, Luke? It looks like the cross."

"Right, at the first guess," he said, laughing. "It goes back with Howard to-morrow. Do you want a farewell glimpse of it?"

"How many farewell glimpses am I to have of it? I thought it went back with David long ago."

"So it did, but Howard had some trouble with the inventory," said her husband, skillfully telling the truth and avoiding it at the same time.

She leaned nearer to him, and unclasped the case. Upon the age-yellowed velvet the ruby cross in its old-gold setting seemed to glow like red fire.

"It is wonderfully beautiful, isn't it?" she said, taking it up in her slender fingers.

"Yes," said her husband. "I've never seen anything to equal it, and you and I have seen some rare things, Mollie."

She assented absently, a dreamy look in her eyes, and her fingers, slipping over the stones, seemed almost caressing. Then, with a sudden catching of the breath, she

bent down. A moment later she had carried it to the window and was looking at it intently.

"What do you see, Mollie?" asked her husband, quickly.

"Nothing; I am so used to the feel of the stones that for a moment they struck me as being a little rougher, that one at the bottom, particularly. But it is imagination, of course. Lovely bauble! There is nothing in Beresford that could replace it."

"Nothing, Mollie?"

"Oh, well!" she laughed. "You know what I mean, dear boy. But I would not want to see it disappear, and not because I am fond of it either."

"Of course not! You are superstitious!" smiled her husband. "You have too much faith in that old prophecy."

Mrs. Beresford smiled back at him.

"If the truth were known you are just as firm a believer in the thing as I," she said. "Before the cross is united to its companion it will disappear, and with its disappearance some great evil befall our house. That's part of it, isn't it?"

"That's the part you believe in, evidently."

"Did it ever have a companion?"

"How do I know? I have never seen it, never expect to see it."

"But there *was* a Dame Joan."

"That, surely. There was a Dame Joan, and she had two daughters, Joanna and Marianne. Now, whether the two crosses were made for them, or whether, as the story runs, Marianne married beneath her, and left her home followed by her father's denunciations, taking the cross with her, we have nothing but the old chronicle to tell us. But in very plain language Dame Joan asserts 'That there will always be a shadow on the Beresford family until the mate of the cross is found.'"

"Yes," said his wife, "it is that which bothers me. If you read further in that old book of what followed, you will see that this is true—that there is a black streak of poverty or trouble or even wickedness hanging over some one of the living Beresfords. See Derwent Beresford's career, for example!"

"If I read at all, I must read back," said Judge Beresford. "And I don't like to read back, Mollie."

"It isn't pleasant," she said, in a low tone, "for these beautiful rubies were set in the

golden chalice that was one of the treasures of Monthule Abbey, and when the Beresford who gave up the old faith took these for his prize, I think he brought evil upon his house. That was Marianne's fault, you know, Luke—her husband was not beneath her, save in that he was a Catholic who had suffered under Henry for his religion."

"Nonsense, Mollie! I don't see that the sable shadow has been much in evidence during the last few generations. I can remember my grandfather most distinctly—a pious, God-fearing old chap—and my own father was the best man that ever lived. Unless I——" He looked at her suggestively and laughed. She laughed, too, and rose to her feet.

"There is no telling what *may* happen," she said, smiling. "There are many years in which you may return to the ways of your ancestors. Is that Anne? Oh, David. You are going away again?"

"Over-night—on business, this time. Good-by, sister. I was telling Luke how splendidly fit you are looking."

"Yes, indeed—a few more months, and I expect to be a well woman," said Mary Beresford. "You are sure it is only over-

night, David? I told Mrs. Clarke you would be home for the twelfth; it's rather late for a garden party, but she says hers is going to be somewhat of a novelty, even if it is October."

David nodded without replying. There was little room in his head just then for any person's affairs but his own.

"Good-by, Luke. Unless something happens I'll see you this time to-morrow."

"Good-by," said the Judge.

"Why not wait? Anne and I will drive you to the station."

"No, thank you, Mollie. I prefer to walk and keep warm."

"It isn't cold."

"The *weather* is all right." He laughed significantly, and went out, while Mary Beresford turned to her husband with a half-smile.

"He means Anne," she said. "Anne has no patience with David."

"I shouldn't think Anne would—she's too serious to tolerate a flyaway, and she must despise that trait in a man of David's years—his responsibilities, too, if he cares to shoulder them."

"You love David so much that I can't

understand how you can see his faults so plainly.”

“I would have to be blind not to see them—but I think that his faults are merely surface ones. He is obsessed with the idea that his unfortunate marriage has lowered him in the eyes of all who know it, and of myself in particular. At times he is very despondent. Some might say I am wrong in not allowing him to apply for a divorce, or even, as he asserts, helping him to get one——”

“Oh, Luke, he mustn’t do that!”

“He won’t. Not, at least, while I am alive. Still he has the wish to rid himself of the creature, and I can’t blame him. But he is suffering for his own folly.”

“That is it. He has no right——”

“He was no careless boy, led away by a moment’s passion. He was to blame, not the woman. I still hope that the bearing of the consequences, bitter as they are, will bring out his manlike qualities.”

Meanwhile David Beresford was walking briskly along the road to the station, whistling under his breath, and with a comfortable, well-pleased feeling in his breast—a feeling that was always in evidence when he had money. He had given himself lots of

time, for he intended to make a "virtue of necessity," as it were, and spend ten or fifteen minutes with Mr. Vale, the station-master, before he took the train to New York. Every one who met David Beresford liked him, and he did not find it hard to open a conversation as he strolled leisurely out on the platform, and, lighting a cigar, handed another to the short, thick-set man who followed him.

"There's not very much excitement in a place like Beresford," he said. "The station is really only a concession to a few influential residents, don't you think so?"

"From now on things are going to change a bit," said Mr. Vale. "The Pierce Company have done a lot for us with their new houses down the village way. We get a good deal of Avona traffic, too—the outskirts, I mean. It's a better road from here on than it is from the Avona station back."

"Does anything ever happen beyond selling a few tickets?" laughed David Beresford.

"Nothing," said Mr. Vale. "The last thing of any account was that wreck two years ago, but that only chances once in a lifetime."

"Fortunately—for those who are in it," said David Beresford dryly. "I was one of those who 'barely escaped,' you remember."

"That's so, that's so—I had forgotten. Oh, well, they say lightning never strikes twice in the same place, if the saying is any consolation. Once in a while one comes across a crank. I had a specimen this morning. You know it kind of livens things up for a fellow."

"No doubt," said David Beresford. "Especially if the crank has a loaded pistol in his pocket and a notion that you are an old-time enemy."

"Oh, nothing like that. The one this morning was a woman. Some kind of a foreigner, she was, to judge by her looks, jabbering half Italian and half English at me. She came flying into the station with her hat in her hand, and almost purple in the face—and then insisted that I was charging her fifty cents too much for her ticket to New York. She was still arguing and sputtering when the train came in. She had to pay up or lose it, and she chose to pay, of course."

David Beresford smiled sympathetically, and swung one leg over the other, puffing

out a cloud of smoke. He had suddenly lost all interest in the conversation, and although Mr. Vale talked on at some length he answered merely in monosyllables or by nods. But his brain was busy. Anne had not deceived him! Anne had told the truth! And yet he could have sworn—How did they get away, when he had traced them so close to Beresford? He could not be mistaken—it was impossible.

A sudden thought struck him—what if the woman had bought that ticket to New York as a blind? What if she had deceived Anne herself? The Louise Duchard he knew was too careful to trust any stranger, and he could swear Anne was that to her—as yet. He would find out; he would get off at Deepdale, and inquire. He might have to tell Luke that he had postponed his interview with Harmon—but that was the least consideration. His interview with Harmon was a very uncertain affair; it depended rather more upon chance and the mood, than any real purpose.

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE ROAD TO AVONA

**A**NNE came down with Mrs. Beresford's wraps across her arm, and then Jordan knocked to say that the carriage was at the door. It was a little, low, easy-going affair, and Beau, the black horse that pulled it, as easy-going as itself. Anne always drove; Mary Beresford would not go out with any one else, excepting her husband, for one trait of her illness was extreme nervousness.

"I am almost afraid to feel so well, Anne," she said smiling, when they were on their way home. "To me it seems miraculous. These last few months have worked wonders, and if I continue——"

"There is no reason why you should not," said Anne sturdily. "I felt, from the very start, that that new method of treatment would help. Dr. Holmes is positive it will cure you. He comes to-day, doesn't he?"

"Yes. He is very faithful—a good fellow, Anne."

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"He is interested, and no wonder. To actually cure what so many others failed to remedy——" The pause was significant.

"You could be proud of the achievements of those you like, Anne," smiled Mary Beresford gently.

"Oh," said Anne, "and why not? I can not conceive of any one taking up a profession and not reaching the very highest rung of the ladder. If I had a brother like Dr. Holmes, for instance, I imagine I would make his life a burden, I would be so anxious for him to forge ahead."

"That is it, Anne," said Mary Beresford, with the keen insight into character which her long years of brooding illness had given her. "I do not think you were born to achieve, so much as to inspire others to achieve."

"That is a very nice way of putting it," said Anne laughing. "So far in my life—and I am twenty-five—I do not think I have helped others to achieve, as you declare. I should be very much satisfied with such a position, dear Mrs. Beresford."

"Then I think you are very close to winning it," said Mary Beresford, with a sad little note in her voice. "But I won't speak

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of that, Nan—not until I have to. There is Jordan's blessed old gray head at the door! It would be queer to come home and not see Jordan."

Mary Beresford was still apt to be pleased and worried at trifles. Anne nodded gaily now as the two came up the broad stone steps together.

"Mrs. Beresford has just said something very nice about you, Jordan," she began. "She said it would be queer to come home and not see you at the door."

A delighted look flashed across Jordan's face.

"I hope I may be here just as long as she is pleased to see me," he said, and the tone of his voice showed that he meant it, while Mary Beresford, who had given way, for the moment, to a little feeling of sadness at some thought of her own, smiled happily at the evident pleasure which her remark meant to the good old man. Soon she was in her own room again for her usual nap before dinner. Luke Beresford was still at his big work-table when Anne came down and looked in.

"Have you any letters?" she asked brightly.

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"A few—but they don't amount to much," responded the Judge. "They can wait until to-morrow, Anne, if there's anything else you would like to do."

"I'd rather let them wait—I want to go out for an hour or two. Where's Mr. Howard?"

"Gone for a stroll and a smoke. He'll be back directly. By the way, my dear, the papers came for Johnnie Ward this morning—the Governor has been kind enough to commute the sentence, and the poor chap can come home to die, at any rate. Will you bring them to his mother, Nan, if you pass that way?"

"I shall make it my business to pass that way," said Anne cheerfully. "The poor creature's been waiting every day this week; she will give no one the pleasure of going with them but herself. Poor old mother! Her happiness will be almost as heart-breaking as her patient suffering."

"Anne," said Judge Beresfold solemnly, "I think both she and her son have suffered unjustly. I think this is one instance in which justice miscarried. Only for that conviction I could not have interested myself in the case. If John Ward is guilty, then

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I am deceived for the second time in a long career, my girl."

"Poor little Mrs. Ward knows that—I've told it to her often," said Anne. "And I think it has helped her to bear the burden with more patience. The papers are ready?"

"In the safe; you know where to find them."

Anne went to the safe and pulled out a long drawer. As she did so she picked up the black case.

"Why, here's the cross," she said. "How did it get back? I thought you had sent it away?"

"I had; but it didn't stay away," said Luke Beresford, smiling a little grimly, and without lifting his head. Anne put the case back into the safe, and took out the neat envelope which was marked "John Ward." She still wore her heavy coat, and now, holding the envelope in her hand, she took a leather box from the table and slipped the strap over her shoulder.

"What! Picture-hunting at this hour? Pretty late, isn't it, Anne?"

"No—there's a good light, and I'm going down as far as the Turn. There's a de-

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served oriole nest I want to get for my collection."

"I'll be back for dinner, surely, Jordan," she said a few minutes later to the good old man who stood guard at the door. "I don't know just when or how much before—but it won't be necessary to say that if any one comes looking for me."

"I understand, Miss Anne." Jordan opened the door for her and then watched her through the glass as she walked quickly toward the iron gates. There was a shrewd look of satisfaction on his kind old face.

"She's worth a million, our proud Miss Anne. She's off now to spoil some more of Mr. David's villainy, I'll be bound. He's got a black heart, for all his handsome face, that same Mr. David! God help any one who puts any trust in him!" He looked thoughtful. "I don't like the way he and Harkins seem to pull together. I must mention it to Miss Anne, some time."

Although it was really the beginning of autumn, there was little hint of autumn in the air when Anne turned off from the well-kept road which ran past Beresford Court into another almost equally as well-kept, and which would continue so for a half-mile far-

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ther on until one left it for the narrow little path at the Turn, as it was called, which led to Avona, the next village. The green beauty of the summer still lingered. As yet no frost had come to touch the leaves to crimson and to gold, and the quiet air seemed almost slumberous. Anne unbuttoned her coat and slipped it back over her shoulders, with a vague wish that she had donned a lighter one.

She was not insensible to the quiet beauty of the place, and although the time had surely arrived for the departure of the song-birds, she thought she recognized some old friends in the little forms that flew across the road from one beautiful maple-tree to the other. For them the business of the year was over. Their families were launched out into the world, full-fledged, and they could skim from branch to branch, enjoying the repose of labor well accomplished. To Anne, who had watched them in the mating days of spring, who had come again and again with crumbs of sugar or bread to coax them into friendliness, who had caught pictures of their nests when they contained their precious treasures, or again induced this or that shy warbler to yield tribute to her

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camera, the scene now seemed melancholy. The nests were there still, hidden from the glance of the casual pedestrian, but plain indeed to her accustomed eyes—deserted and forlorn, a little dilapidated, too, as if the dainty inhabitants would never have further use for them.

She stopped a moment to slip back the catch of her camera case and get the camera itself in readiness, holding it open in her hand. She was not unprepared for a loiterer along this path. It would not surprise her any to meet David Beresford himself. She did not trust him. She had not the slightest hope of being able to hoodwink him. A man so shrewd in evil could foresee any device of hers. The caution which had carried him so successfully through many threatening dangers would compel him to suspect her in spite of his own convictions. Even if Louise Duchard had played her part well that evilly keen mind would see deception in it. For that reason she had resolved to lose no time; she must see and hear for herself, and help, or provide help, if that were necessary. She did not doubt her power here, for Anne's had always been a helpful nature. She was one of those born with

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ability to give efficient service. And these are fewer than people think.

The sound of a horse's feet beyond the curve made her draw aside, for the path was somewhat narrow. Her face brightened when she saw the single occupant of the carriage, while he pulled up quickly, and sprang out.

"Anne! I'm delighted! Come, jump in and let me drive you back."

Anne laughed.

"No, thank you, Dr. Holmes. I am anxious to get on, not to go back."

"I'll drive you on then."

Anne shook her head.

"This is a private expedition—no trespassing."

"You hurt my bump of conceit. When first I saw you I thought that perhaps you had strolled this way knowing I was coming."

"Well!" said Anne. "I never knew you had any conceit—and I'm glad I've hurt it."

"So it seems," but he smiled. "Can't I really persuade you to let me take you to your destination? It is four o'clock now; have you much farther to go?"

"Yes," said Anne.

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"When will you get back?"

"In time for dinner, I hope—but as you are staying as usual, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you then. By the way, which road have you come?"

"Deepdale way. I called on old Squire Coombes. He's almost gone, poor fellow."

"Deepdale way? Oh, then you saw no one I knew."

"I thought I caught a glimpse of Judge Beresford's brother on the station, but I was too far off to be positive."

"David Beresford!" There was something almost like dismay in her voice. "On the station at Deepdale!" She was quiet a moment, frowning, and the young man, not knowing the cause of her perturbation, stared at her, conscious of a new and unpleasant sense of irritation which he could not analyze.

"Well, I must be going," she said at last, trying to speak cheerfully. "I hope you were mistaken, but there isn't any chance of it. I am to call on old Mrs. Ward, now; the Judge has been successful, and I have the papers ordering her son's release."

"Splendid!" said Dr. Holmes. "But,

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Anne, that is only a short distance; why can't you let me go with you?"

She smiled, and held out her gloved hand, looking up at him with her clear, candid eyes.

"My expedition does not end there; I must go farther, and I must go alone. Do not mention this at home, please. They know nothing about it."

"Yes, Anne." He smiled and nodded, but there was a curious expression on his face as he swung into the carriage again. With the openness of an extremely frank nature even this slight appearance of secrecy disturbed him.

Anne was sensitive enough to feel that Dr. Holmes was a little displeased, but her thoughts were too busy just then to dwell much upon his sentiments. She did not know what journey lay before her, nor into what section of Avona she was going. At the most she had not quite four hours, and a part of that would go to Mrs. Ward, twenty minutes of it, anyhow, reflected Anne, when every moment was precious. And the road beyond the Turn was a lonely one at night. Anne was not afraid, but it

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was her way to plan against all possible dangers. And Dr. Holmes had seen David Beresford on Deepdale station!

Mrs. Ward's cottage, a four-roomed low building, once a pretty white and green, but now drab-gray in its neglect and poverty—was set back from the road, and almost hidden by the tall lilac bushes with which the yard was filled. Anne had barely turned in toward the little door, when a trembling voice hailed her.

"It's Miss Anne! It's Miss Anne! I've been on my knees waiting for you this past hour, Miss Anne! God grant it's happy news you're bringing me."

"The very happiest!" cried Anne, putting an arm tenderly about the quivering old form in its rusty black that had come stumbling and running down the path to meet her. "Here are the papers, and the Judge has sent you tickets and passes and everything else you may need. Besides that, although Johnnie does not know it, he will be home with you to-morrow if you go after him."

"Go after him!" Mrs. Ward took the papers and Anne's hand in her shriveled, work-worn palms. "Could I trust any one

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to go after him but myself, the poor lad? Who but his mother should go after him?"

"No one," said Anne promptly. "That is what the Judge says, too."

"God bless him!" said Mrs. Ward. "And his—and you, too, Miss Anne! God bless all at the Court, even them that don't deserve His blessing."

Anne shook her head.

"I'm surprised at that from you, Mrs. Ward—but never mind." The poor creature's joy had turned her brain, she thought. "No matter whether we deserve it or not we've got to have it or our lives are wasted."

"Yes," said the old woman. She wiped her eyes, from which the tears were welling. "Don't mind me, Miss Anne, dear—I'm almost beside myself with the joy of it. You'll come soon to see my poor lad?"

"Yes, indeed," said Anne warmly. "Try to keep calm, dear Mrs. Ward. You know how much depends upon you; let's hope he'll have many years with you at Beresford."

The old woman looked up at her with a strangely saddened face.

"My boy is coming home to die in my arms," she said. "I've helped him to live

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and now if I can help him to die easier, 'tis the only joy left for me on earth."

A quick mist sprang to Anne's eyes. She bent and kissed the withered cheek and walked on down the little path, the tears on her own cheeks. The old woman watched her until she disappeared. Then raising the papers to her lips with a passionate movement, she turned back to the cottage and closed the door behind her.

## CHAPTER VI

### JOHN WARD'S STORY

**A**NNE was too sympathetic not to be filled with sorrow for the poor old woman she had left, who had seen her greatest joy, the pride of her whole life, turn into its sorrow and degradation. She had known the Wards almost since her first coming to Beresford Court, herself a girl of twelve. Old John Ward was the gardener then, a kindly, whole-souled man, strong in faith, pious and earnest. Little Mrs. Ward—always little—was not young, nor was she old yet in years, though sorrow and trouble had combined to whiten her hair and bow her small form closer to the ground. Anne remembered her well as she was thirteen years before, during the happy days when she and little Johnnie, a boy of ten, used to go fishing and birds'-nesting together. A year afterward old John Ward took ill, and when the professors summoned at last by Judge

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Beresford gave their decree it was that he was doomed to the living death of cancer. He would suffer years, perhaps, before the end, but suffering was inevitable.

And so it proved. Through torturing nights and painracked days the old man lived on and on, without a word or a murmur of complaint from his lips, his rosary ever in his hand; the crucifix that gave him courage to bear all suspended on a black cord about his knotted throat. During all those years—there were nine of them—his family had reason to bless Judge Beresford. No device of science, no help of training, no comfort yet thought of by man, no suggested treatment that he did not secure for the patient sufferer. And when old John Ward saw his welcome release at hand, when his nine years of earthly purgatory lay at last behind him, he took the warm fingers of his only boy—a slender stripling, then, of nineteen years—in his own chilling grasp.

"I want you to promise me, my lad, that if ever it's in your power to help the Judge you will not hesitate, no, not even if it means the very life out of your body. Promise me that, Johnnie?"

"I promise, father—anything in honor."

"Anything—in—honor, yes. You say well, Johnnie. God bless you."

He died an hour afterward.

There seemed little chance that the boy would be able to do anything for Judge Beresford. But no one expected what did happen. Two years later a thief broke into Beresford Court. A large sum of money, going into the thousands, was in the safe, for the Judge was having extensive repairs made, and had the money on hand to pay the workmen. That was taken, with a diamond necklace belonging to Mrs. Beresford, which had been the Judge's wedding-gift. To the dismay of those at the Court, as well as to the unbelievable horror of poor old Mrs. Ward, the robbery was traced to her only boy, the stripling who had promised his father on his death-bed that he would give his life to aid the man who had been so kind to them. Worst of all, to remove all doubt as to his crime, he pleaded guilty.

And the boy went to jail for his crime, and because of the circumstances, and even in spite of all Judge Beresford could do, he was to serve fourteen years in expiation. But he said nothing. The money was never found. The necklace was returned in a

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common express package to Mrs. Beresford herself, without a word or sign to show from whence it had come. But the boy guilty of such base ingratitude never recovered from the shock of being found out. Very soon he was ordered to the hospital, from which he never emerged, and at last, since the prison doctors declared that his lungs were almost gone, Judge Beresford applied for his pardon, that he might come home to die.

That was John Ward's story—the story of the likable boy who had been one of Anne's playmates, the boy who had been his mother's idol always, the practical Catholic, who had served daily Mass punctually in the little chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes at Avona until he had outgrown his boyhood. Father Walsh, himself never said anything about the affair, never expressed an opinion one way or the other. The people at Beresford Court seldom spoke of it, for it was a sore wound to the Judge. When he mentioned it at all it was to declare his belief in John Ward's innocence. Yet in spite of his legal experience and acumen he could not tell why he held this belief.

One by one these things stood out in Anne Holloway's mind. Many a time she and

Johnnie Ward had raced along this path together, or walked home soberly from confession, side by side. She was sorry for the Judge, who had been hurt and injured, a little sorry for the boy, in spite of his almost incredible baseness—to Anne, true, loyal, and grateful, one of the worst of crimes—sorriest of all for the mother. Since the day of her boy's conviction and imprisonment she had declined all help from the Judge, although during old John Ward's illness it had been accepted as cheerfully as it was bestowed. For "young John," though a willing worker enough even with the liberal wages paid him by the Judge himself, was not able to meet the heavy expenses entailed by the treatments and professional attendance which Judge Beresford insisted on providing.

"You'll tell him it for me, Miss Anne," she had said pleadingly, broken-heartedly. "I couldn't take money now from him, but you make him understand it. Not in decency—I couldn't. My poor bit of honor and pride is all that is left to me. I'll get along, with what the few vegetables and flowers will bring, and Father Walsh is going to help some. 'Twon't be much I'll need

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to keep the breath of life in me. Only just you tell him that, Miss Anne, and don't put it on me to tell him. I'm sure it would kill me to speak to him, or even to meet him on the road."

"God help her, poor soul!" had been Judge Beresford's comment. "Well, I'll respect her wishes—yes, tell her so, Anne. I wouldn't hurt her for the whole world; she had enough sorrow, if ever woman had. Thank God, poor old John did not live to see it; a man hasn't got the pluck of a woman, I think, in facing a thing like this. If she is ever in real need, we'll get it to her through the priest, and she needn't know anything about it."

So Anne went back and gave her Judge Beresford's kind message: "He would do just as she wished, but she must never want for anything that he could give her." At which the old woman burst into a passion of tears and ran quickly into the house, while Anne turned homeward once more, sad and thoughtful.

It was Anne, too, who had brought the news of young John's serious illness, and first urged the Judge to secure his pardon. She wondered a little now, as she walked

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with swift steps through the slanting afternoon sunshine along the road to Avona, what would happen when John Ward came, sick and ailing, to the poor little home. There had been enough for the mother, just as she had said there would be, but even if he lived only a few weeks provision must be made for the unfortunate young man. However, there was always Father Walsh to fall back on; and with this last thought to set a seal of comfort, as it were, upon all the troubled thoughts that had preceded it, Anne bent her attention to the matter which lay before her—glancing at her watch with a start of dismay as she realized that it was already half-past four, and that she had no idea, as yet, of her ultimate destination.

Temple Street was harder to discover than she had thought it would be. Like all small towns where streets are named to suit the fancy of builders with large ideas, only a very few of the population of the upper end of the village had ever heard of Temple Street, and Anne found herself, to her disgust, wandering in a sort of half-circle. It was after much inquiry that she finally located the Lafarge cottage, stumbling upon it almost by chance, as it were. It was a

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neat frame building, the usual type of detached country dwelling, with a garden in the back, and a well-kept, though tiny lawn, stretching to the front gate. Anne went up and hammered upon the door, which boasted of an old-fashioned knocker. A full five minutes passed before there was any response. Then a small, dark-faced woman appeared. She said nothing, only looked at Anne suspiciously.

"Louise Duchard?" asked Anne. "Is she at home?"

"My name is Lafarge, mademoiselle."

"Yes, I know. But I wish to see Mlle. Duchard—and Madame Laurot. Will you tell her it is Miss Holloway?"

The woman looked at her dubiously; then, without answering, she closed the door, and left Anne standing on the stoop. She was gone but a second, however, when Louise Duchard opened the door a second time.

"Oh, Miss Anne! I could not believe it when Emilie told me. I am surprised to see you. There is nothing wrong—I was not followed?" she began anxiously.

"I am not sure," said Anne. "But then, one never can be sure. It is well not to wait. There is much to be done, and you

will pardon me for wanting to see just how things are before I decide."

"Yes, oh yes," said Louise Duchard quickly. "Oh, Emilie," to the little dark woman, who now appeared at the end of the hall, "it is all right. This is Miss Holloway, the young lady I went to see to-day, the Miss Anne who promised to help my little mistress."

A change came over Madam Lafarge's face at once. She extended a thin, hard brown hand, which Anne took, and shook cordially. Then she followed Louise Duchard into what was evidently a back parlor.

It was plainly but well furnished. The shutters were closed in and the room brilliantly lighted. A large lamp rested on the table and it and the three gas jets were turned up to their full extent. The glare was so totally unexpected that for an instant Anne hesitated, almost confused.

"So, now, my little mistress," she heard Louise say. "At last we have found one good friend. Miss Anne has come."

Anne's eyes followed the set, capable figure as it moved across the room, and then rested at last on the couch, where, half-sitting, half-lying, was a girlish form. Her

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outlines were almost concealed by a full robe of dull-red silk, which seemed to flow over her from her throat to the ground, concealing even her feet. The face above that robe was almost deathly in its pallor, and the whole picture presented was so childish, so appealing, yet so pathetically frail, that Anne's heart went out at once in a burst of sympathy and pity.

"It is she of whom I told you," went on Louise, in that soothing, coaxing voice. "Won't you come a little closer, miss, so that she can see you?"

Anne swung the camera strap from her shoulder, dropped the case on a chair, and slipped out of her coat. Then she walked around the big table, and stood before the couch. The girl—she looked like a child still—had great black eyes which stared up at her, wistfully, searchingly. The face was thin and worn, the lips absolutely without color, the form seemed shrunken and lost in the folds of the clinging gown. And as Anne looked more closely she realized, almost with horror, that the thick hair which rested above the shining, blue-veined forehead was as white as snow!

But no hint of this crept into her steady, firm voice as she spoke.

"How do you do?" she said, holding out her hand. "Louise told you that she was coming to see me to-day?"

There was no answer, no movement from the ghost-like little being before her. Instead those black eyes searched her face hungrily, almost menacingly, almost terror-stricken.

"I am here to help you if I can, and if you will let me. I want you to trust me and to know that anything I can do for you or your baby is going to be done—now, at once. That you will never, never have to be afraid of any one or anything again."

And now she had touched a chord which responded.

"Yes," she said, in a faint, far-away voice. "You have that sort of a face—you look as if you could be trusted. Sit down, please, where I can see you and hear you. Oh, I do want to meet some one—*some* one—who will help me not to be afraid. My poor Louise! I loved her, but she is afraid. Not of him, but for me. She is afraid for me! And Emilie is afraid! Afraid of all

who come near this house. And sometimes," her voice sank to a low whisper, "sometimes when my little baby looks at me, I know she is afraid, too!"

"Well," said Anne cheerfully, a smile playing about the corners of her mouth, "we have first to discover what there is to be afraid of. Now I am not afraid of any one, excepting God—and not even of Him, because I try to do what is right. I would be very much afraid of Him if I did what was wrong."

"Ah! When Louise told me of you she said you were a Catholic."

"I am a Catholic."

"Yes. It helped to make me want to see you. Long ago—oh, it is very long ago, now—when Louise used to bring me to church with her, and make me say my prayers, I did not like it much. Louise said I was a butterfly—yes, that is true! I told her that afterward, when I turned into a sober brown moth like herself, I would see if I liked her religion."

"Yes," said Anne patiently.

"Afterward, when I was not even a moth, but a poor little worm that some one had stepped on—then I went to the big church

and said over and over the prayers that help so much to soothe the heart and the brain. I needed something very strong like that, and I asked Louise to teach me. It is beautiful, indeed, but it is not for me. It is too high for me, too beyond me. One must be too good."

"Poor child!" said Anne, pressing the cold little hand in both her warm ones. "But that is what it is for—to help us to be good, and better and better, all the time."

"But to be good like that one must forgive. Forgive!" she caught her breath sharply. "Oh, he said he loved me so much—and he was so cruel! And when the baby came, I wrote, yes, I wrote then, after the long, long months! I said to myself and to Louise that perhaps the baby would help to change him. Besides, she was so lovely that he must grow to love her when he knew her, my little one. He did not come—nor did he answer my letters. But when it was a question of money—of those shares of my poor father's, he came, then, quickly, without a letter! Oh, yes, without being sent for, he came!" Her hands tore themselves from Anne's strong grasp, fluttering wildly. "He came in. He stood. He picked up

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my little baby in his arms—so, so!” She was shaking now with excitement. “Yes, and he would have taken her from me only for Louise. Only for Louise!”

“My dear child——”

“And then your religion says forgive! I must forgive, it says. But how can I forgive? Tell me, tell me?”

Anne caught the fluttering hands in hers again.

“You must listen, dear. You are worried and unhappy, and that is the reason you talk so. But soon I will show you that there is nothing at all to worry over. I shall not say anything to you about forgiving—no. We shall not speak of that, or think of that, because we are going to be very, very busy. First, we shall think of you—and you must believe my words. See how strong I am! I am very strong—feel my hands, look at me.”

The white, childish face upraised to hers met the glance of those steady, unfaltering, dark-gray eyes. The hot fingers caught the strong, steady, capable hands in hers and held to them tightly. In the background, leaning against the long mirror which hung between the windows, stood Louise, but

Louise could not see, for the tears were running down her cheeks, and her breast was rising and falling convulsively in sobs that she tried vainly to repress. For what seemed a long while that searching glance met the gaze of eyes which promised peace, such peace as she had not known in many months, it seemed to her. Then, like the rays of moonlight on snow, a little smile touched the corners of that pale, childish mouth.

“Yes, you are strong—I can see it, feel it. You are strong.”

## CHAPTER VII

### ANNE FINDS A WAY

**T**HERE was silence in the little room. Louise dried her tears, for her love realized the new note in the tired voice, as if there were peace and security in view. Anne smiled gently. She did not speak, but held the hands grown so quiet now in her strong clasp. The girl's eyes still lingered upon her, but a look of hope had followed those words of Anne's. She had found a bulwark, a refuge. There was some one who could really aid her—not with Louise's unfaltering devotion, so complete and unfaltering that it vibrated with fear for her—but with an impersonal strength which was all the stronger because of the uncompromising nature which upheld it.

And then Anne spoke in that clear voice of hers.

"You want some one to help you and your little baby. That is just what brought me

here, so I want you to listen to me very carefully, for if you do not listen, and do not do what I tell you, there will be no use trying. I can promise you a better friend than I can be. Some one who will protect and care for you and love you and your baby. But not all at once, dear. This will take time, but while it is being brought about you shall stay here with Louise, and go in and out, and walk and ride and play with your little one as it pleases you, and always feel and know and be positive that not a soul shall ever hurt you. That you will be perfectly safe—so safe that even if David Beresford came along the street, or up on the porch, or into this very room, he would not dare to lift one finger to harm you or Lolita. Yes, when next you see David Beresford he will be on his knees to you, begging *you* to have pity on him, and to spare *him*."

Her mouth grew hard, her eyes were brilliant as she spoke. But the sound of that name stirred terror to its depths.

"Oh, I wish I could believe, I wish I could believe!" cried Norma Beresford, covering her face with her hands, and beginning to sob helplessly. "It is so long, so long! And every time I look at Lolita I think 'It

will be to-night! It will be to-morrow! Perhaps even now he is creeping upon us. He will come to tear her from me, my darling, my treasure! I shall lose her forever!" She hesitated an instant, gasping like a wild thing at bay. "I say it would be better for my baby to be dead—then I could be sure of her! Then I need fear nothing! Then he could come if he pleased, and I would laugh at him! Tell me, do you not think it would be better for my baby to be dead?"

She looked at her with appealing eyes, and at once Anne realized the real terror that filled the heart of Louise Duchard. Here was the specter that haunted this good, loving woman—this was the fear that hung over her. For in a moment of brooding madness, of sudden frenzy, that little life might be extinguished by its mother's hands. And the child once gone, either by natural or other means, there would be no hope, ever, of saving this already half-crazed brain!

Anne understood almost with dismay. So this was it! She did not lift her eyes to Louise Duchard's face, but she knew the piteous appeal that shone upon it. And in that moment of stress Anne fell back upon

her unfailing friend, the Mother of the friendless and the helpless, the suffering and the oppressed.

"Blessed Lady of Light, Our Lady of Victories, help me to help this unfortunate girl!"

"How can it happen, or has it happened, that you are so afraid of David Beresford?" she began wonderingly. "Cruel he may be, and probably is. Mean, I have no doubt—yes, even bad and wicked. But what real harm can he do to you—here, in this country——"

"In this country, where he is Judge Beresford's brother!" broke in Louise Duchard, now, hoarsely.

"Oh!" said Anne. "So that is it? *That* is it?" She waited an instant, thinking, with frowning brows. "You must not say such things," she went on. "You know David Beresford does not want your baby; he wants the mining shares which will mean money to him. He is following you about because he knows you have them. Why do you not let Louise take those things and put them away? And when they are gone, write to him, and tell him so. Then let

Louise get some one to sell them for you; there are many, many ways in which you can dispose of them, so that he——”

“We have thought of all that,” put in Louise Duchard. “He would make us get them, or give him the money, always with the same threat of stealing Lolita. We have talked it over and over so many times.”

“But listen,” said Anne Holloway. “There is one person to whom you can give them, either to keep for you or sell for you—and this one person will forever settle the matter. There is one person, at the mention of whose name David Beresford will shrink in terror like the coward that he is—Judge Beresford.”

“Yes,” said Louise quickly, passionately. “Yes—and how shall we get Judge Beresford to listen to us? Has he not already turned me from his door? Have I not sent him letters? Uselessly? Oh, Miss Holloway, don’t you see why the mention of you here, in Avona, among Father Walsh’s people—the proud Miss Anne, whom all love so—don’t you see how I came to look upon you as our refuge, our savior, our only chance of safety?”

“Yes,” said Anne, under her breath. “I

see. It is Providence. This work is being put on me . . . well, I shall not avoid it." She looked at Norma Beresford and then at Louise. "I will take the shares to Judge Beresford."

"You?" said Norma, in a little shaken voice.

"I knew that you would," said Louise.

"But wait," said Anne. "We shall make our position doubly sure—doubly effective. I will take those shares to Judge Beresford, and he will have them attended to, and he will ask no questions, for he is not the man to ask questions. And at certain times of the year Louise Duchard will receive the income from those shares. While I——"

"Yes, yes," cried Louise feverishly.

"Will see David Beresford, and tell him I know all, everything—and that upon his own actions rests the price of my silence. If he swears to leave you in peace—to seek you no more, I shall tell Judge Beresford nothing. But at the first hint of molestation I shall go to his brother—and that means the end of all things for David Beresford. He possesses nothing only what Judge Beresford gives him, and the story of this cruelty of his would set his brother's face

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against him forever. Do you understand now?"

They were silent, as if unable to comprehend the strength of purpose, the force behind those calmly uttered words.

"I had thought you could, perhaps, know Judge Beresford," said Anne gently. "Know him for the great, true man he is; but this will not be possible. You must give up that gain for the sake of a greater—for the sake of peace and safety, to be able to live quietly and without fear. For he is such a coward, David Beresford!"

"Oh!" said Louise Duchard, the thrill of joy in her quivering tones. "That is it, that is it! I see, I see! And it is good. You hear, my little mistress? You hear? She will put those shares in the care of the good brother; the bad one will not demand them, for she will tell him that she knows the truth—so that never again will he dare to ask or threaten any more! The thing is from heaven, from God, from Our Lady herself! This is indeed the way."

"Yes," said Anne, and a mist rose to her eyes, as with all her heart she thanked our dear Lady for the thought that had come almost like an inspiration. "This is the way.

Judge Beresford shall learn nothing, you will fear nothing, and worry over nothing."

The little pale-faced creature on the sofa looked at her almost incredulously.

"You will do all this for me—a perfect stranger?"

Anne smiled.

"No, dear—for a little sister, a dear, unhappy little sister, who is going to do something for me."

"What can I do for you?" she asked wonderingly.

"You can see the good doctor I shall have call here to-morrow—a gentle, kind man, who will tell you just what you are to do to get well and strong. You must remember, dear child, that if you *were* strong and healthy as you should be you would not suffer so much. All these fears which torment you, or most of them, come from sickness. You can't help yourself or your baby to be happy unless you shake them off."

Norma Beresford half smiled.

"But Louise is not weak——" she began.

"But Louise is weak—for you," said Anne quickly. "She is not afraid or nervous for herself. You are worrying Louise, and you can not do what is right by your

baby unless you take care of yourself. You must eat good food, and drink rich milk, so that those thin cheeks grow round and rosy. Soon we will have a nice little carriage and a comfortable little horse, and you and Lolita will go for long drives together, out into the country—always happy, and young, and cheerful, with Louise to take care of you both!”

“Oh, you make me happy, happy!” said the young mother, her eyes shining. “Already I feel as if my heart—here—is beginning to get warm, and I have been so cold—so cold that it seemed like ice which no sun could melt! You are melting it! To call me your sister—you, with your strong, brave face! I shall be so glad to have a sister. Louise has been my mother such a while. She cares, but she is afraid. You do not seem the least afraid——”

Anne laughed sweetly, confidently.

“Of what? Why should I be afraid? There are happiness and joy in store for you, and I shall help you win both, you poor, poor little thing!”

“You will take those papers now? Now, at once? To-night?”

Anne looked at her, perplexed.

"The shares—you will take them away with you now?"

"Why——" said Anne.

"Oh, yes, you must. You will not refuse me? Take them with you; let me feel that they are safe, and with their safety know that I, too, have nothing to fear? Will you?"

Again Anne hesitated. She was not thinking of possible danger, possible trouble, but of the responsibility; she was touched, too, by the absolute trust which this young girl must repose in her.

"Give her everything we have, Louise—everything. Take them. When I know you have them I shall be able to sleep. Yes, yes, I know I shall be able to sleep to-night, if they are not here!" She tossed her sofa-cushions aside, rapidly, feverishly. "I have not dared to let them go—Louise will tell you that—and I dared not sleep lest he might come and take them—all that I have for my poor little baby—all that is left to her, if anything happened to Louise or me!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### DANGER!

**A**NNE looked at the papers, neatly folded, and held together by broad rubber bands. There were three separate stacks of them. For a moment she wondered how she would dispose of them, how she could conceal them, and then her glance fell on the strap of the camera case which trailed on the floor from beneath her long coat. She pulled out the leather carrier, put the camera on the table, and then slipped out the dividing partition. The papers fitted beautifully; the case was just the right length.

"One would think I had foreseen this," she said cheerfully, as she sat on the sofa beside Norma Beresford and arranged the papers to fit, Norma watching with the delighted interest of a child.

"I shall leave the camera until to-morrow," she said.

"Oh, will you come to-morrow?" cried Norma happily.

"Every day, unless, of course, there is something important to detain me, and if that occurs I shall get word to you. But only on one condition—that you do as the doctor says, and that you obey Louise. Do you hear, Louise? One mouthful of milk refused—and the next day I shall not come."

"I hear, Miss Anne, God bless you," said Louise Duchard, and there were tears in her eyes and on her cheeks. "Can't you see that my little mistress is better already?"

"Oh!" said the fragile creature, "I *know* I shall sleep to-night, and that is why I am better. It will be so good to get those things away and to be able to tell him, if he comes, that I am not afraid, and that my little baby will be taken care of. It is only for her sake."

"I know, dear, I know."

"Will you not see her before you go?" she asked wistfully.

Anne's eyes and hands were busy with the leather case. She had not expected this, although she knew now that it had been inevitable from the first—they were asking her to look at, to admire David Beresford's child! Yes, even to hold it in her arms, perhaps. Anne felt all the honest soul of her

rising in protest—David Beresford's child! Oh, she could not see it to-night—not to-night, with disgust and contempt surging like a tempest in her bosom. She felt afraid, then, of the anger which this poor little helpless baby would evoke in her.

But Louise had not waited for her consent, taking it for granted. She went into an adjoining room, and when Anne lifted her eyes, she was coming back with a little white-robed figure in her strong clasp. Norma Beresford started up quickly but Louise gave her a warning glance.

"She is asleep," she said. "Do not wake her, the little one!" She bent down then and silently laid the sleeping baby in the young mother's extended arms. And the child slept on, undisturbed, while Norma looked into Anne's downbent face.

"I am not happy when she is away from me," she said simply. "I only know peace when she is in my arms—and then, then—I am watching the doors, the windows—I tremble at every sound!" She glanced about her fearfully, for habit was strong within her. "Look!" she whispered. "Is my baby not lovely?"

Anne looked at David Beresford's child

—a baby a year old, plump and rosy, with delicate features, long, curling black lashes and soft blond hair that clung to the little head in a mass of ringlets. A lovely baby, indeed, thought Anne, one that any artist would have been glad to paint, a face perfect in contour from low white forehead to softly rounded chin. And as Anne gazed her gentle heart melted, and a warm gush of tears sprang to her eyes. She leaned over very quietly, and pressed her lips to the tiny hand. "Poor little baby! Poor little helpless infant! What a heritage——!"

And then she checked the thought. For surely the Beresford heritage was one of courtliness and honor! Surely there were no more honorable men that its family boasted, no gentler or more beautiful women! This child was of the same blood as Neil, her darling. That its father was the unworthy one, despicable, dishonorable, was not this child's fault. By training and by prayer she could be made as fair a daughter of this worthy race as any who had preceded her.

"She is a dear baby!" she said, in a tender voice. "A dear, beautiful baby—and so tiny! I do not wonder that you are afraid. But there is no longer any reason to fear;

you will remember that, little mother?" she continued, lifting her earnest eyes to the thin countenance so close to her. "You will remember that?" she repeated.

"Yes, I will remember," said Norma Beresford. "I feel happy—I really feel happy to-night. And yet—no, it is not happiness—not that yet. But it seems as if I can breathe—I have time to feel tired—time to rest. Oh, it is so good to know that I can rest."

Louise took the baby in her arms again. It stirred. The long black lashes curled upward, and Anne saw that the eyes were those of David Beresford himself, deep blue, lustrous, shining. The woman hushed it with a gentle, rocking motion, and then, as the lids closed, went out silently, while Anne took up her heavy coat, slipped it on, and swung the case with its precious contents across her shoulder. After which, clasping the mother's thin hands very tightly in hers, she bent above her.

"Little sister, you will sleep to-night," she said, in her firm, strong voice. "You know now that friends are near, friends who will help and guard and cherish. Think these things, little sister, when the black



"A figure barred her way, springing out suddenly from the shadow of the trees."—Page 110.



thoughts come. To-morrow you will see me again, and then we will plan for a happy future and dream of the day that is so close—the day that we can face David Beresford and laugh at him.”

“Yes,” said Norma Beresford, feverishly, pathetically, and Anne bent over her, touching her forehead with her lips. Louise Duchard went with Anne to the door.

“She is much better,” said the faithful woman, in a broken voice. “Oh, ever, ever so much better! If she sleeps to-night, then I know she will surely get well.”

Anne smiled at her.

“Did you think she was going to die?” she asked, with a little note of rebuke in her voice.

“Oh, Miss Anne, if you had seen her as she was only this morning! She scared even Emilie, who is not easily scared. It was fear for her that drove me at last to you. I took the desperate chance, but now——”

She caught Anne’s hands in hers and carried them to her lips, kissing them almost passionately.

Anne shut the door behind her. It was six o’clock; she knew the hour, for she had

glanced at her watch before emerging from the dimly-lighted hall. Six o'clock! She would barely have time to reach home for dinner at half-past seven. It was quite dark, and the journey before her was a long one, surely an hour, as quickly as she could walk.

Now, in accepting the trust which Norma Beresford and Louise Duchard reposed in her so absolutely, in taking the shares which David Beresford was so anxious to secure for his own private ends, Anne had had no thought of peril to herself. But as she went out the little front gate of the Lafarge cottage and turned down the lonely street a sickening sense of impending evil gripped her. The sensation was so strange, and so unforeseen, and so unusual, that Anne stood stock-still an instant. For the first time in her life she realized what it was to be afraid!

Of what? She could not put the fear into words. Not for herself, she thought, resuming her walk, but slowly, as if to thresh out this new feeling which, for an instant, had actually seemed to overwhelm her. Her arm clung to the camera case. For another instant she thought of returning and giving it back to Louise Duchard to care for until the

morning. She was on the point of doing this. But—she had said she was not afraid. Her calm scorn of possible danger to any of them at the hands of David Beresford had been the means of soothing the half-crazed little wife and mother into security. If she returned now and gave these papers back to Louise Duchard who could tell how much harm such an action might do? True, Louise Duchard might be able to conceal the fact; but if she couldn't?

There was no one else in Avona, not one. Yes, there was. Father Walsh, the gray-haired pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes. She would confide in him; a precious half-hour would be lost in going to the rectory, for his house lay altogether out of the road which led into the country beyond, but that was better than—— And then again, so quickly did her mind work, she remembered that Father Walsh was not at home. It was the first Wednesday in October, and he had announced last Sunday that he would hold rosary devotions on Wednesday nights in the chapel down at Deepdale!

"It seems," said Anne under her breath, and with a whimsical little smile touching her firm mouth, "that this is to be strictly

my own affair. I am permitted no interference. There is not a single soul in Avona to whom I can turn in a matter like this."

She walked on swiftly, plunging her hands into the pockets of her coat, and her fingers encountered her rosary.

"Why, of course," she said, and the smile deepened. "I am armed, and Our Lady of Victories is taking care of me. To-day," she said, lifting her face to the blue sky above her, "I put that poor unfortunate child in your care. To you, before that, I gave the case of Johnnie Ward and his pardon. To-night I give you myself, dear Lady of triumph over wickedness! I do not know how **this** is going to turn out, whether or no your **Son** will permit evil that good may come, **but** I place myself in your hands absolutely—myself, and the precious papers confided to me. Do with us as you will."

Her heart seemed to grow suddenly lighter, her head went up.

"I shall say the whole fifteen mysteries," she said, "and if I meditate properly I ought to be well occupied the entire way."

With the steady step of one accustomed to walking she went along the little street and out into the road that led into the lovely

country beyond. She had reached the last of the joyful mysteries when she came to the cross-cut. She paused an instant, an aspiration in her heart, for here indeed lay the danger. And as her feet struck into the cool, sweet-smelling, almost impenetrable darkness of the woods, Dr. Holmes's words came back to her, as plainly as when he had spoken them, but with redoubled terror.

"I thought I caught a glimpse of Judge Beresford's brother on the station, but I was too far off to be positive."

She knew every inch of the road so well, for it was her favorite walk, but she had never before known fear of it. Her swift step broke into a run, and even as she did so she thought she heard the cracking of a twig in the woods on her left hand, and she veered to the right in uncontrollable terror.

"I shall surely laugh at myself when I reach home," she thought. "And I have assured myself always that I have been brave! But once I get to the Turn I can shake off this eerie feeling, I know. Therefore, the best thing I can do is to get to the Turn as soon as possible."

Her feet now were fairly flying. She hardly felt the weight of her heavy coat, but

the perspiration stood out in beads upon her forehead. Her breath grew shorter, she was gasping—and then——

She had hardly time to realize the full horror of the figure that now barred her way—springing out suddenly from the shadow of the trees. A strong arm was thrown about her shoulders. Her hand went quickly to the case and she slipped the catch, letting the case fall to the ground. She struggled in the grip that held her and threw her head back gasping, as a cloth reeking with some sweetish, pungent substance was pressed across her nostrils. Heart and breath seemed suddenly to fail. But worse than the sense of her own danger was the knowledge that the two who depended upon her were to be deprived of that which had cost them so much suffering, so many anxious moments! Her form collapsed weakly. It seemed to crumble in the grasp of the man who held it, and Anne sank helpless to the side of the road.

## CHAPTER IX

### BEYOND THE TURN

**I**T took Anne what seemed a long while to realize that she was alone, that her head was aching and dizzy, and that her limbs were trembling with nervousness. Consciousness returned very quickly, for the limp yielding of her body had probably deceived her assailant, and she had fainted before the drug had been able to affect her seriously. As she struggled to a sitting posture, she did not realize, at first, the terrible calamity that had befallen her. Half-lying on the damp earth she had no thought of the case and its contents. But as her brain cleared and the strange buzzing left her ears, a fear that was worse than a physical pain went through her heart.

A sob burst from her. In spite of her strong will she could not repress it. In all her life, heretofore, she had never faced a situation without a calm self-assurance that she would be able to grapple with it, to carry

it through to the end. But David Beresford had been too strong for her! She did not attempt to look for the case. The case would be there, was there, beside her, she knew, but its emptiness would be the last straw. She dared not look at it. Her head sunk upon her hands; she was unconscious of the passing of time. She felt as if she had betrayed a trust. A chill seized her. She tottered to her feet, and held on to the overhanging branches of the great maple which had sheltered her.

Home! She must get home where she could think clearly—where she could rest, where she could get a grip on this most unhappy climax to the good she had been endeavoring to accomplish. Home! Why, they were probably sitting down to the dinner-table now, waiting for her, wondering at her absence! She could see Mary Beresford's anxious, worried face. She could see Maurice Holmes, perplexed and disturbed.

How she managed, in her weakened condition, to cover the distance that intervened between the Turn and Beresford Court she never knew. But at last, with a deep sigh of thankfulness, she reached the big gates, and rested against them a moment before

going up the graveled path. Jordan came to the door, and the warm, scented air of the hall struck her in a gush of welcome. And then she saw Jordan's astonished, worried face. She smiled at him.

"Yes, it is I, Jordan." Her voice sounded faint and far away. "I was—detained. What time is it?"

"Almost half-past, Miss Anne."

"Half-past what, Jordan?"

"Seven, Miss Anne."

"Oh! They are not at dinner yet?"

"Not yet. The Judge is still with Mr. Howard in the study——"

He hesitated—some one was coming down the stairs, a figure in evening dress which stopped short when it reached the lowest step.

"Good heavens! Anne! What is the matter?" It was Dr. Holmes.

Anne moved across the polished floor. She saw the look of wonder, of perplexity on his face, but she did not speak to him. Instead, she put her finger to her lips and passed him by, one hand clinging to the broad balustrade for support, past Judge Beresford's study and Mary Beresford's room, into her own. Feeble, trembling,

gasping, she felt for the electric light. The dazzling glare of it hurt her eyes for the moment, but she stood, holding to the door, trying to calm her shaking limbs. Oh, she dared not attempt to go down to-night! She dared not! The heavy weight on heart and brain would not allow her tongue to perform its office.

And then, suddenly, like a flash of lightning in the dark, she thought of David Beresford. David Beresford! A tingle went through her veins. Anger gave her new life—anger sent the blood coursing more rapidly—anger lent energy to her movements. Yes, if it had been his hand which had robbed her, his brain, so sharp in planning evil, would tell him to get to Beresford Court before she did. Was he here? Why had she not asked Jordan? And what would he say when she brought him and his brother together? For, more than anxious as she had been to spare Luke Beresford further knowledge of his brother's contemptible character, this night had shown her how useless were her efforts.

"It is but putting off the reckoning," she said. "I have no doubt that he will try, in the end, to malign me, and the evil spirit

which prompts him may help him to do even this successfully. Yes, the Judge must learn all."

A feeling of melancholy succeeded the anger. How it would hurt him, that noble, just man! How it would hurt Mary Beresford, who had been so true a friend, so loving a sister, since the day she came under her roof, with no claim upon her but the claim of friendliness and loneliness! How could she ever repay the tender care and affection which had been given her! That she herself was the inspiration of this care and affection, Anne, in her passionate gratitude, would not acknowledge, nor claim any credit for, or dream ever, that she had repaid, over and over, by her devoted love anything which they had ever done for her. She could not bear to inflict a single pang upon Judge Beresford or bring the slightest shadow to Mary Beresford's brow! And what would this terrible revelation mean?

She had thrown off her coat and unhooked her dress rapidly while these thoughts went through her brain. Her face in the mirror shocked her. It was white, drawn, even to the lips, there were black circles under her eyes—she dared not go to the dinner-table

looking like this, she *would* not, she said to herself almost feverishly, as she filled the basin with hot water, and bathed her face until it tingled. She was brushing up her hair when Rosalie Walcott tapped at her door, and put in her sunny, curly head.

"Oh, my goodness, Anne," she said, catching a glimpse of her in the inner room. "You will be late. I can't understand why the bell hasn't rung."

Anne knew, and her heart jumped. Blessed old Jordan!

"Help me catch this collar, Rosalie—I am ready now," she said, slipping a white dress over her head, and hooking it rapidly. In the excitement of the moment, and thanks to the hot water, Anne's face had resumed its normal, healthy tint. A close inspection might show the strain under that seemingly placid exterior, but Anne trusted to the forces which she knew she possessed to rally to her aid and carry her over any dangerous moments. Two seconds longer and she and Rosalie were going downstairs together side by side. Jordan, with an anxious hand on the bell, caught sight of them, and in a moment the first musical ring sounded through

the house. Yet Anne Holloway had had only ten minutes' grace!

"I've got the greatest favor to ask of you, Anne," Rosalie was saying in her childish voice. "It's something I want from Aunt Mollie."

"What! Another favor?" cried Anne. "And what can this be, when you won't ask it for yourself? I'm afraid to let you tell it to me."

"Oh, don't be afraid," said Rosalie nodding. "It's not very terrible, but it's something I do want badly. Oh, there's Dr. Holmes! Why, what's the matter?" The young man coming out of the library had just seen them, and now stared at Anne in such genuine astonishment that even Rosalie noticed it. Anne passed it off lightly.

"You're sure I'm all right?" she asked smiling. "Dr. Holmes seems to think I'm a ghost."

"I don't like you in that dress," said Rosalie. "It does make you look a little pale, but I don't see anything else the matter with you. Here's Aunt Mollie now—coming down with Mr. Howard and Uncle Luke. And Neil, of course," as a door

banged, and they heard the rapid running of feet along the upper hall. "That's *your* fault, Anne! I don't see why a boy of ten should be allowed all the privileges of a grown-up."

"Only once in a while," said Anne gently. "And if it hurt him any—Neil, dear, be careful! Even if we have Dr. Holmes with us to-night, we are not anxious to give him work to do."

But Neil had already raced down the stairs at breakneck speed, and was waiting for his mother at the foot.

"Whew! I'm starved!" he said. "I thought that old bell would never ring to-night."

"That is the only thing that ever ails the bell," said Judge Beresford. "Neil's appetite! May it never fail!"

"Amen," said Dr. Holmes. In a few seconds they were inside, a family party, in truth, for each had an accustomed place at the board. Anne sat between Dr. Holmes and Neil, thankful beyond words for Neil's merry chatter. The sight of food had sent a feeling of nausea through her. She was afraid of some sudden, unexpected weakness.

"I haven't seen you since early afternoon, Anne," said Mrs. Beresford. "Did you fall asleep, or have you been out?"

"Out!" said Anne promptly.

"I thought David was upstairs," said Judge Beresford now, looking at the empty chair beside Rosalie.

"He is," said Rosalie, promptly.

"I'm glad he's changed his mind and that he's going in with you, Howard," said the Judge, in a lower tone, but Anne caught every word—her ears were straining to hear. "You talk to him. You know how. It will gratify me more than words can say if he takes up that—you are more than punctual," he broke off to address the immaculate figure in evening dress which now approached the table.

"I'm glad to miss the soup—I don't like it," said David Beresford, as he took his place beside Rosalie. "It seems such a waste of time to eat soup!"

They laughed.

"But then David is so busy," put in Rosalie slyly, at which all laughed again. David unfolded his napkin carelessly, nodding to Dr. Holmes. He had not appeared to see Anne, but better than any one else at

that table Anne knew that he was aware of her presence. The blood tingled again in her veins. She choked down the sensation of weakness and sickness that surged over her. She would not dare to show the white feather here—to-night. And yet it was marvelous. Had his hand stolen the treasure entrusted to her? If so, he had probably imagined that she was still lying unconscious in the Beresford woods. What were the thoughts in that evil, plotting brain? What plan would he next carry out? An impulse came over her to rise at that moment and denounce him there before them all—cry out to his very face that he was a villain—perhaps a blacker villain than even she had any idea of. He bent his handsome blond head close to Rosalie, and said something in a low voice that brought the ready laughter to the girl's lips. He was the handsome, carefree, gay society man, fitting into just such scenes as this—one born to shine only in social circles!

Anne went on with her dinner mechanically, and no one noticed that she was in any way different from her usual self, or that the plates set before her remained untouched.

“Did you get to Mrs. Ward's this after-

noon, Anne?" asked Judge Beresford suddenly, as if the thought had just come to him.

"Yes. I brought her the papers. The boy will be home to-morrow."

"Poor chap! You haven't seen Father Walsh yet?"

"Not yet. I would have seen him, but he goes to Deepdale on the Wednesdays of this month. But I will probably see him to-morrow and arrange everything."

"Will you visit our jailbird also?" asked David Beresford, in a mocking tone, and addressing his conversation directly to Anne. From under level, scornful brows she looked at him, but the words that came to her lips were not uttered.

"We'll not speak like that, David," said Judge Beresford, kindly enough, but decisively. "I don't care for it. If the poor chap sinned, he's suffered, too."

"I don't call it much suffering to serve two years of a fourteen years' sentence and then be let home to spend his hidden booty," said David Beresford.

"What charity!" mocked Rosalie Walcott. "I don't think all the 'hidden booty' in the world could reconcile me to a term in prison."

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"He has five or six thousand stored away safely—a chap like him can cut quite a dash on that much," said David Beresford.

"David!" said his brother. "We'll change the conversation, if you please." Judge Beresford saw signs of anger on Anne's unusually pale face, and he had no desire to have a passage of arms take place between the two, especially in Mr. Howard's presence. But a singular thing happened just then. Anne's glance of contempt was intercepted by the keen-eyed, sharp lawyer. One instant their glances held, and in that instant Anne realized that in this man, at least, David Beresford had no friend. No word of personal or family matters had ever passed between Mr. Howard and Anne. Anne was not one to discuss such with another—nor was the lawyer. But Anne knew that he shared her opinion now. And so the meal went on, those about them unconscious of the hidden forces which raged beneath the surface, threatening at any moment to overleap all barriers, carry away all restraints.

Yet convention held its own, and they laughed and talked and were amused and pleased as if the world existed only for the moment.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BERESFORD CIRCLE

**S**EEN thus, in their own stately dining-room, the Beresfords were an interesting circle. Judge Luke Beresford was a man of fifty, stately, distinguished, his iron-gray hair an odd contradiction to his unlined countenance, and bright, large dark eyes. David Beresford was his direct opposite; too handsome, indeed, for a man, with a distinguished manner in addition to his looks, and the way, as Louise Duchard had put it, in disgust, "which made one feel as if she were a princess." Few women of his class could resist this delicate aroma of attention, which was never expressed, but which seemed to be conveyed subtly, as it were, as the most exquisite perfume is always the most elusive, and the most attractive. Yet his eyes had the candor of an April sky, his whole countenance gave the lie to any imputation of falsehood or deceit. Dr. Holmes, rugged

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and dark, had no claim to any share of his good looks or gallantry. But there was cleverness hidden behind that brow and the sharp eyes which narrowed observantly at times.

Rosalie Walcott was Mary Beresford's niece, the only child of her only brother, who had married Elizabeth Holloway, Anne's sister. Thus, while Rosalie was closely related to both, neither Anne nor Mrs. Beresford were related to each other. But with the death of father and mother, and the adoption of Rosalie, a child of five, Mary Beresford's warm heart found room, too, for Anne "the little sister" who, at twelve, was left as much alone in the world as her niece Rosalie.

This explained Anne's coming to Beresford Court, which had, from then on, been her home. She and Rosalie grew up together, as it were, but Anne was always, in feeling, a score of years the elder. No children had blessed the Beresford union before Anne and Rosalie came. Mary Beresford used to dilate on this, the greatest sorrow of her happy life, to Anne, the comforter.

"Have you ever prayed?" asked Anne, the

practical as well. "Have you ever asked God to send you this blessing?"

No, she had not. She was not a Catholic—like Anne and Rosalie. She had never bothered much with religion. It had surprised her intensely when she heard that her brother, gay Bob Walcott, had been received into the Church before his marriage and had died an edifying death after leading a practical Catholic life.

"If I thought prayer would help, Anne, I would be willing to pay any price—*any* price, even my life," she said, once, almost passionately.

A year later she had reason to recall these words. She told them to her husband, who bent, haggard and wan, above her, and the life she had declared her willingness to forfeit hung in the balance, and no one knew, not even the skilled professors who were gathered for consultation in the next room, whether she would see another sunrise. White-faced, Anne Holloway knelt beside the crib which held the child for which its mother had been willing to pay that price which only a mother can pay. Anne did not leave her knees that night—nor did little

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Mrs. Ward, the gardener's wife, praying desperately for the same boon in the cottage at the edge of the Beresford woods.

"It is not worth it, Mollie," Luke Beresford had said. "It is not worth it, my dear. For what will I do without you—and who will take care of the little fellow?"

"There is Anne," said Mary Beresford, smiling wanly, but confidently.

When morning dawned they said that she would live. They said it doubtfully. She would live because she was the wife of Judge Luke Beresford, who could provide all that made life possible. They did not say anything about her future; they promised nothing.

"If the unforeseen does not happen, she will live."

And so she had—a weak shadow of her former bright and healthy womanhood, on whom Luke Beresford had spent a fortune, for whose sake he had given up his profession and coveted honors some years before. She lived—sometimes asking God to let her die for very weakness. And there had been no break in the gloomy horizon until two years previous, when Dr. Maurice Holmes, back from a long postgraduate course in a

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foreign university, had promised hope. They had not dared to believe him at first, but now every day saw the hope nearer of fulfilment.

"There is Anne," Mary Beresford had said in the shadow of death ten years before. Almost every time Luke Beresford looked at his big, robust, dark-eyed, red-cheeked boy he recalled these words. For the girl of fifteen had taken that infant into her loving care, and it was Anne whose devoted life, whose watching nights and careful days had made Neil Beresford the joy and delight of his parents' hearts. They knew well what they owed to Anne. They would never forget it. The same courage which had inspired Norma Beresford's confidence that day had lived in the girl's body, too, ten years before, had lived in it ever since, and would live in it while life lasted.

Past the frail delicacy of Mary Beresford, the sparkling beauty of Rosalie Walcott, one's eyes wandered to Anne Holloway and lingered with her longest. She was barely of average height, slender without being thin, and the first impression was that the head was too small to carry the great weight of dark hair imposed upon it. But presently

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one noticed the poise of that head, and the long, white throat which held it up so proudly. It was her carriage that had earned her the title by which so many knew her, "the proud Miss Anne," who "walked like a queen." And yet it was a misnomer. For in the kindly dark-gray eyes there was no hint of pride, nor in the curves of the flexible mouth. It was a face to inspire bravery. It was not wonderful that poor little Norma Beresford had felt the charm of it.

At one time Mrs. Beresford had expressed the fear that Anne was destined for a convent, but Anne shook her dark head and smiled. She did not know, she said; she was praying to find out. This intensely spiritual nature had been a source of the greatest interest to Mary Beresford, and its development in a girl of twelve, to her, a most remarkable thing. Yet Anne never spoke a word of religion, never talked of her Church, never dwelt on any particular or general devotion. It was this reticence, perhaps, that most attracted Mary Beresford. How could anything in one's life be so potent and yet be so concealed? Rosalie was a Catholic mainly because her father and mother had been Catholics. The realities of

life had scarcely touched her. She was light, volatile, practised her faith because Anne's quiet, rock-like insistence permitted no other course. Rosalie's religion and Anne's, though one, were far apart. So thought Mary Beresford, watching, listening, conscious of a strong desire to believe as Anne believed, and to be as supremely confident that the providence of God encompassed all. Such consolations as Anne gave were those which she most sorely needed. So very quietly she began to prepare to enter the Church.

But here an unexpected obstacle arose. Judge Beresford, one of the best men in the world, had one inherent prejudice. He did not believe in changing the faith in which one had been reared. And there was Neil—the only son, the future heir. Their English ancestors had rejected Catholicity in King Henry's days—he scorned the thought that it had been done from any motive but that of pure conviction. His pride of birth, the honor of his house, demanded conformity to that which they had chosen.

This, said Mary Beresford, was all well and good, if he were an active member of his own denomination. But he did not go

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to church. It was the deadlock, however, and this blank wall, his wife—intensely loving, with full knowledge of all that he had done for her, given up for her, the sacrifice of his public career had been a hard blow—did not try to mount. She would not go against his wishes; she could not, she told Anne. And Anne knew why, and sympathized with her.

It was the strong partisanship, the strong affection which Luke Beresford aroused in those who knew him well that made those of his family secretly sympathize with his weakness. It seemed strange that so capable, so just, so clever a man could have a weakness; and yet it was displayed in his great affection for his handsome younger brother. It could only be likened to that of a fond and devoted mother for her child. He overlooked his faults as those unavoidable in so popular and lovable a character. For the first ten years of his marriage, when the prospect of children seemed only a remote contingency, he had looked upon David as the heir presumptive of all the Beresford wealth and traditions. After the child Rosalie's coming to his home, he had even dimly hoped that his brother and she would fall in

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love and live at Beresford Court, and that in time their children would come to enliven the old place.

Neil's arrival changed his views a little, but that faint desire for a marriage between the two still lingered, especially when Rosalie's beauty and charm began to attract suitors to the Court. It was to receive a rude shock. One year back, Luke Beresford suggested this to David himself, and when the idea was rejected demanded to know why.

David told him. He was already married. Foolishly, unluckily—yes, crazily, for he, the man who thought himself so wise, attracted by a pretty face and clinging, winning ways, had mated with a chorus girl. Carried away by her distress, her appeal, he had taken this irrevocable step. To find out, in a very short while, that she had planned the thing deliberately and that she was a woman who could never be acknowledged as a Beresford!

All this he told, haltingly, miserably, shamefacedly. At first Luke Beresford was angry—bitterly so. And then David spoke of going away—out West, if his brother would agree, beginning life anew in a strange country, burying himself away

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from the wreck he had made of his life. The protective instinct of fond affection was aroused anew in the older man's heart. He must not play a coward's part now. He had brought this on himself and he must stay and face it. Then, hopefully, David spoke of a divorce—a quiet, secret proceeding which no one need ever learn anything about—the real reason, indeed, for the confession of what he called his “mad folly.”

His brother's reply astonished him.

“Marriage is not a promise to be lightly given and as lightly withdrawn. It is your bond, your word, the foundation of society. You shall never, with my consent, secure a divorce. A good thing it may be, as some assert—but I have seen so much of the ruin of it that no individual can afford to add to the general misery it entails. Your life may be spoiled—it probably is, but you spoiled it, and must abide by your own act.”

Which was an intensely disagreeable revelation to the young man. He had, indeed, counted on this divorce, which, with Luke Beresford's prestige, would be so easy to secure, and which Luke Beresford, out of regard for the Beresford name and honor, would have done without publicity—which

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in David Beresford's case meant pure trickery. He knew better than to defy his brother's wishes. So he let the matter rest, holding it, indeed, as a sort of grievance which he used to broach occasionally in order to make the Judge more lenient with him. And indeed, although Judge Beresford would not like to confess it, David's very evident yielding to his wishes in so important a matter pleased him, and he often, for this very reason, overlooked delinquencies which might otherwise have more seriously annoyed him.

As he gazed about his comfortable board now, with bright, merry, laughing faces everywhere, he was supremely content. A family of his own—boys and girls to grow up around him, would have been his greatest delight. Ardent, indeed, both he and his wife had longed for children, their one great sorrow its denial. Then Neil was given to them, but at what a cost! What years of suffering on the woman's part, what years of dread on the man's! Only now could he be properly thankful for Neil, when he saw the tint of health creeping back to Mary Beresford's cheeks and lips, the vitality of health to her weak form.

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Yes, now he could rejoice in Neil, he thought, and there were Anne and Rosalie—and David. Who could be dearer than these three? So he joined in the jest and merriment as readily as any one there. He would not think of Dr. Holmes and his attentions to Anne, who was the heart of the house. There was soon to be a break in that happy circle! Ah, well, he thought, he would enjoy it while he might.

## CHAPTER XI

### "BUENA VISTA, COPPER"

**D**INNER was over, and Rosalie was seated at the piano. Maurice Holmes had taken an empty chair which stood beside Anne, and was listening with a smile on his lips, for Anne was scolding Neil.

"We're bringing you up altogether wrong," she was saying.

"Which means, Neil, that you are to go to bed—no matter what else she says," laughed Dr. Holmes.

"Of course," said Mrs. Beresford, from her corner of the room, where an open book lay on the table beside her. "It's very easy to abuse a privilege, my little son."

"It's only half-past eight," said David Beresford, turning to smile to the boy. "And Neil is not a baby any longer. He's almost a man, now."

"Bed, Neil!" said Neil's mother, quietly passing over this remark. The little fellow got up reluctantly.

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"Uncle David is going to sing; can't I wait for just one song, Mother?" he asked pleadingly.

"Well——" the mother hesitated. David crossed to the piano. "Oh, I think we can allow you to wait that long," said his father. "Go ahead, David."

The song was finished, a rollicking sailor's chanty, in the chorus of which Neil joined with eagerness. Once it ended, however, the boy knew there was no further excuse for him. He rose, and sidled toward the door, with an imploring glance at Anne. She laughed, and said something in an undertone to Dr. Holmes, then rose to follow. But there was a general outburst of disapproval.

"Anne, you'll do nothing of the kind!" "What nonsense, Anne!" "Anne, he's too big a boy." Again Anne smiled.

"Neil will never be a big boy to me, I'm afraid," she said. "Now, please don't notice us—I sha'n't be five minutes away, and Rosalie will play to you. Besides, I'm not really going for Neil. That new batch of prints came home last night, and Dr. Holmes wants to see them."

"A very crude and transparent ex-

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cuse——" began Judge Beresford, but Anne went out, tucking Neil's hand under her arm. Her foot was on the lowest step of the stairs, when Jordan came to her hurriedly.

"Miss Anne?"

"Yes, Jordan—run on, Neil, I am coming up directly, dear. What is it, Jordan?"

"There's a note for you—it came five minutes ago. I did not like to disturb you——"

"Thank you, Jordan—and thank you for holding the dinner-bell. Your delay gave me just the few seconds I needed. Listen to me. What time did Mr. David get back? This afternoon? This evening?"

"About five o'clock, Miss Anne."

"Five o'clock! *Five* o'clock? You are positive, Jordan?"

"Yes, Miss Anne, positive." He looked at her a moment. "But Harkins was out, and did not come in until seven. And I saw him bringing iced water to Mr. David's room soon after."

"Harkins!" said Anne now, in a breathless voice. The information took her completely by surprise.

"Yes, Miss Anne. I've not said anything at all to you, because I wasn't sure. But I

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think I am pretty sure now, Miss Anne."

"Harkins! Why, Jordan, I—— I can understand that clearly! I'll talk to you again. Yes, Neil, boy, I'm coming." She ran lightly up the stairs, and followed Neil into his room, but she did not wait to talk or read to him as was her wont. The note which Jordan had given her, tightly folded, was clasped in her hand, so she bade Neil good-night hurriedly.

"I can't stay now, laddie," she said; "we won't have any new hero story until to-morrow."

"Oh, it's just because Dr. Holmes is there to-night," said Neil mischievously, as he plunged head foremost into the pillows. "Rosalie says that you and Dr——"

Anne shook her finger at him.

"Never you mind what Rosalie says; you know what a tease she is, and she just wanted to see if she could tease *you*. Don't let her do it, Neil. And when you have finished upsetting that nice, fresh bed, get your clothes off. But, Neil——"

"Yes, Anne?"

"Don't forget Mrs. Ward when you say your prayers to-night, and I want an extra little prayer for some one else, a poor

stranger in great sorrow. Say that one, Neil."

"Yes, Anne," he answered seriously, and she went out into the hall, rapidly uncreasing the note as she did so. The thin, spidery, foreign handwriting was unknown to her, but it took her but a few seconds to grasp the words.

"Dear Miss Anne," she read. "Please come to me. I am standing behind the big tree close to the gate. I must see you, as I have found out something very important."  
—LOUISE."

Anne caught her breath sharply. What could have happened? Was this a trap? And set by whom? What good would it do any one to set a trap for her—unless, indeed, David Beresford were afraid that she would tell all to his brother? He must surely expect something of the sort! But to bring it so closely to her door—when he knew she would be on the lookout for just such an occurrence!

Yet if it were not a trap?

She ran back into her own room, caught up her cloak and veil, held them a moment thoughtfully, then put the cloak back. The veil would be protection enough. The brief

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moment she intended to stay outside would not hurt her. Her eyes fell on the box that held the prints. With these in her hand and her veil across her arm she went downstairs again. David Beresford was singing—his was a pleasant, musical voice, and he always had a new song or two when he came back to Beresford Court from his trips to the city. The song had just begun—she realized that from the opening chords—and turned to Jordan hastily.

"I have to run out as far as the big oak-tree, Jordan," she said. "And I am not sure who it is wants to see me. Will you watch? There is some one who—who would, perhaps, be just as glad if I failed to return." She felt that Jordan would be satisfied—in her heart she knew that Jordan, the observant, had to be told very little of what was going on at Beresford Court. "Where is Harkins?"

"I don't know just this moment, Miss Anne."

"Go and see; I'll wait here. He must be kept busy while I'm out—and if he isn't in the house I won't go at all."

"I understand." Jordan went downstairs, but was back almost at once. "He is

cleaning the silver—has only just begun, so he'll be busy surely for the next ten minutes."

"Splendid! Keep your eyes on him, Jordan. Hold this box for me."

He nodded comprehendingly. She twisted the veil about her head and ran out with fleet steps. Silhouetted against the light that streamed out from the door stood Jordan's erect, soldierly figure—Anne, glancing back once over her shoulder, saw him there and felt secure. She reached the gate. A shadow lurking behind the big oak wavered out to meet her.

"Louise! It is really Louise! I was afraid. What has happened, in God's name?"

"Nothing, Miss Anne! But there is some one——"

"Only Jordan—I feared danger and left him on guard. What is it, Louise? Speak quickly. I may be missed at any moment. Quickly, quickly."

"Have you given the papers to Judge Beresford yet?"

The question was so unexpected that it staggered Anne. A lump rose to her throat.

"No, Louise. I haven't the——"

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"Oh, Miss Anne, here, here!" Anne felt a bulky package thrust into her hands. "My little mistress was so confused—did I not say her mind was wandering? She had hidden the right shares completely. The ones she gave you to-night are utterly worthless—they are of the many which her father bought which will never be anything else. See! Here are the right ones—the Buena Vista Copper, they are called—and here are also her marriage certificate and her ring. All these things I thought it best that you should have. You will care for them——"

"The wrong shares!" Anne stood stupefied. "The wrong shares! Louise, Louise, are you sure? For God's dear sake, are you sure?"

"Positive, positive, Miss Anne! These ones I have here are the right—the Buena Vista—you will see—you can ask—the Judge will tell you these are good. These are the right ones that I give you now. The little one does not know it—I do not tell her. It would worry her, bother her."

Anne's heart was beating to suffocation. She clasped the shares and held them tightly. But there was too much need of haste to exchange many words.

"Good-night, Louise! Poor Louise! Your second long journey to-day—you will be thoroughly fatigued. To-morrow we will talk, you and I—I have much to tell you."

"Oh, you are not angry, Miss Anne? I shall not feel the fatigue if I know you are not angry. I felt so upset—I do not know how I got here."

"Angry!" Anne's voice choked over the word. "No, Louise, no! It is all right. You do not know how right it is." She caught the woman's hand in the darkness and pressed it warmly. Then she turned and sped up the path. "Dear Lady of Victories, you have indeed protected the helpless!" she murmured. "I thank you, my Mother."

Jordan was waiting for her. She tugged at her veil and slipped it down from her dark head, and then became conscious of the curious look which Jordan cast upon her. She did not know the picture she presented, for the joy which filled her sparkled in her eyes and flushed her cheeks. She looked like another Anne indeed to the one who had left the hall a few minutes before.

"No one missed me yet, Jordan?" she asked as she took the box of prints from him.

Jordan's warning glance was sufficient.

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Dr. Holmes stood almost behind her, and she swung around to meet, for the second time that night, his surprised, questioning glance.

"Anne!" he exclaimed. A dull-red color surged up over his dark face. "Anne! What were you doing outdoors?"

There was a sharpness in his voice that, for some peculiar reason, was not at all displeasing to "proud Anne." She laughed up at him almost as mischievously as if she were Rosalie, the little coquette.

"Attending strictly to my own affairs!" she answered, the tone in which she said the words robbing them of any reproof. She passed him swiftly, and ran up to her own room. An instant sufficed to hide the precious papers—doubly precious, thought Anne, feeling that they had come straight to her from Our Lady's hands. When she came down again Dr. Holmes was going back to the drawing-room. She caught sight of his tall figure and followed.

"I'm not one bit surprised at your delay," said Mary Beresford, glancing up. "And you have missed some of the prettiest music. Rosalie, will you play that——"

"I heard David singing," said Anne quickly. "What was the name of the song?"

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"'Where Home Is,'" quoted Rosalie, slipping her fingers over the keys and drifting into the melody, playing it slowly, with little arpeggios that accentuated the final notes. "Isn't it too bad that such sweet music is set to such silly words?"

David laughed.

"That's just about it; get the melody first and then it won't matter what English you use to send it out to a waiting world," he said.

Anne, feeling that she could now breathe safely, ventured a glance in Dr. Holmes's direction. He was seated in an easy chair close to Judge Beresford and Mr. Howard, and although taking no part in the conversation, was evidently listening with interest. Anne checked a little, tired sigh. The excitement that had sent the joyous light to her eyes and the glowing color to her cheeks was dying away, quenched in the sense of physical fatigue that now asserted itself. Her ordeal of the past two hours had tried her strength. The anguish of mind which she had endured at the loss of the treasure entrusted to her had been a greater tax than she imagined, and the effort to appear her natural self at the dinner-table had but

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added to the fever that seemed on the very point of consuming her. David and Rosalie were together, and the man's handsome head was close to that of the girl, who was listening to him with a smile on her lips, her face half-averted, her little hands tinkling out a medley of airs and choruses which served to distract attention from the perhaps too intimate conversation between the two. At any other time Anne would have taken instant alarm at this scene, for flyaway Rosalie was very dear to her. But now she looked at it almost apathetically. How foolish of Rosalie to listen to him, she thought. Then she sat down, turned her face from the light, and closed her eyes. Her indomitable will was the only strong thing left—and that would hold her, surely, to the task which she had set for herself. She would not allow David Beresford to see any material change in her, any weakness. Fortunately, Mrs. Beresford's attention was completely given to the book which she was reading, and Anne felt, thankfully enough, that she was practically alone. Snatches of conversation drifted across to her, which she heard and listened to absently.

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"I don't think you will care very much for Aiken——"

"And why not?"

"For one reason, I shall not be able to go——"

"An attraction, David!"

Anne paid little attention. She heard Lawyer Howard's voice now.

"There are any number of cases of this sort—any number. Yes, sir, I could cite hundreds of them."

"I find that brand too strong for me, Holmes—pardon me, Howard—you try one of these little panetelas. What were you saying—oh, about the Meserole case. Yes, that was a queer one. They were appealing it before I left the Bench—or about to appeal it. I didn't see the end of it. I read afterward that the courts adjudged the old man dead."

"Yes, the grandchildren inherited. But he had not been heard from in thirty years. That Buena Vista affair may turn out the same way."

"Buena Vista? What is that?" asked Judge Beresford with interest.

"Why, haven't you been reading the

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**papers? The romance of Buena Vista Copper?"**

**Anne's tired lids unclosed quickly. There was no mistaking the words. "Buena Vista Copper."**

## CHAPTER XII

"JOHN SMITH, WIDOWER"

"**W**HAT is the romance of Buena Vista Copper?" repeated Judge Beresford, after a moment's silence. "You know I have about a hundred shares of that stock. I took them in part settlement of the Dickenson claim." Lawyer Howard yawned a little.

"Pardon me," he said apologetically. "It's one of those rare occurrences which drive men mad. There are all sorts of fools in the world, but mine speculators are about the worst, as any sane man knows. Buena Vista was exploited about six years ago, just the time we had that tremendous copper craze, you remember? The Bu-Vi we call it now—we've had to talk so frequently about it that the name in full took up too much of our time."

"But that isn't the romance," suggested Judge Beresford.

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"No," said the lawyer. "The romance is that the Bu-Vi bubble burst into thin air, and the poor people who bought shares at fifty dollars apiece in good American money sat down and wept. That was six years ago. Now comes the romance. Two years—yes, it's fully two years now, I'm sure, Bu-Vi was investigated by the Government, and a vein of copper discovered so rich that every Bu-Vi share is worth a good deal of money. The mine itself will bring five millions."

"Whew!" said Judge Beresford. "That's the right sort of romance—a very improbable, highly-colored story, Howard."

"That's what it sounds like, doesn't it? There were one hundred thousand shares of stock issued, and no one was allowed to take less than one hundred shares apiece. Fifty thousand shares have been traced, and their possessors made happy. The romance of Bu-Vi unfolds itself. Somewhere there is a man or a woman who holds half the Bu-Vi stock, and is in absolute ignorance of the fact. In other words, there is a millionaire twice and a half over in our midst."

He spoke lightly, and, as he felt, amusedly. There was a deep silence in the room. Lawyer Howard was suddenly con-

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scious that all were listening. The music at the piano had ceased, and the whispering. Even Mrs. Beresford had dropped her book.

"We've been trying to get some clue for the past year, but so far we have absolutely nothing to go on——"

"But the records," said Judge Beresford. "Who bought the stock? In whose name were the certificates issued?"

"No name. At the request of the purchaser, to bearer."

"Great Scott! But they've got something to show——"

"Yes, the purchaser was John Smith, widower, English by birth, American by naturalization."

"What else?"

"That's all."

"Nonsense! Surely——"

"Surely John Smith, or his heir if he has one, has half the Bu-Vi stock thrown somewhere—into an old trunk or bureau drawer—or even buried in a cellar, if he is lucky enough to possess a home at all. That's the romance of Buena Vista Copper."

"Have you advertised?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"For a year. It is absolutely necessary

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to discover the possessor of those shares, if we can."

"A millionaire twice and a half over," remarked David Beresford, and his voice sounded husky. "Is that possible?"

"It is positive."

"Oh," broke in Rosalie. "I do hope I can meet Mr. John Smith somewhere, some day!"

"Mr. John Smith may possess a numerous family in addition to his unfound wealth," said Dr. Holmes.

"But he is a widower," remarked Rosalie, so pensively that all laughed.

"I never thought Rosalie had a fondness for widowers," said Mrs. Beresford.

"There are widowers and widowers," murmured Rosalie. "What would you do if you met Mr. John Smith, Anne?"

Anne turned her head languidly, almost lazily, it seemed to those who were so absolutely unaware of the ferment behind that serene white forehead.

"I should say 'How do you do?'" she answered.

"That is the way—the most solemn subjects are treated with levity under this roof," said Judge Beresford.

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"Is John Smith, widower, a solemn subject?" objected Anne.

"John Smith, half-owner of the Bu-Vi Copper mine, is certainly a weighty one," retorted Mrs. Beresford smiling.

"Two million and a half dollars!" said David Beresford. "Why, Luke, you are not worth that!"

"What have I to do with it?" asked Judge Beresford, looking at his brother in astonishment. And Anne, without stirring, let her dark-gray eyes rest upon the handsome blond face, now flushed with an excitement that nothing could repress. He bit his underlip—not so much at his brother's remark as at the slow, quiet, considering gaze which Anne turned in his direction—a gaze which seemed to pierce through the veneer of gaiety and unconcern and bore into the secret recesses of that evil, plotting mind.

"What is a mere million to a man whose god is money?" said Anne. "Or two million and a half, either?"

"I was but thinking how much it meant, considering it as a whole," said David Beresford to his brother, without pretending to notice Anne's seemingly irrelevant remark.

"Or life or death or heaven or hell to the

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man whose god is the world," she went on quietly.

"Oh, Anne! You always turn everything into a sermon," said Rosalie, in a petulant tone.

"No, dear—there are some things which can not be turned into sermons, even. Only—horrible examples."

"What have sermons and horrible examples to do with Mr. John Smith, widower, two and a half times——"

"Millionaire," put in Rosalie, with a mischievous laugh. "I was afraid you wouldn't get in the right word, Dr. Holmes."

She swung back on the stool. Dr. Holmes left the Judge and Mr. Howard to continue their chat, and moved nearer Anne.

"I thought you were to bring me a batch of prints to look over," he said, standing beside her.

"I did—they are right here." Anne pointed to a box lying on the table. "You did not seem anxious to see them, so I didn't speak of them again."

"May I sit down?"

Anne laughed, and the corners of her eyes wrinkled up.

"Do you prefer standing?"

"Not if you permit me to do otherwise."  
He drew a chair beside her, took up the box and swung back the cover. She looked at him with a steady, searching gaze.

"If there is anything to which one could compare you to-night, Anne," he said, "it is the Sphinx. Have you ever seen it?"

"Pictures of it a-plenty."

He shook his head.

"No picture can do it justice. Dr. Vehring and I went there during one of our vacations. I shall never forget it." He spoke dreamily. "You remind me of that solemn, carved image."

"Its nose has been most dreadfully mutilated, if cameras speak truth," said Anne.

"I was not thinking of the nose, but of the impenetrable mystery of the thing——"

"Yes," said Anne. Then she smiled. "Now tell me what you really want to know. I shall answer you, partly at least—and wholly later. There is very, very much I am going to ask you to do for me."

"Anne, you know——"

"Yes, I know." She spoke under her breath, quietly, easily. "I know—many things."

Maurice Holmes looked at her with his

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grave, considering eyes. She was very remote from him, he felt, wondering a little at the calm melancholy which seemed to lurk in every word—and yet trusting her absolutely, and loving her with a great love—the love of a good, true man, for a good, true woman. There was much she had to tell, when it was hers to tell—and until that time he could wait patiently.

"Are you not tired after your long walk this afternoon?"

"Yes, I am tired."

"You walked home also; you were exhausted when I saw you in the hall when you came in. Your appearance at the dinner-table surprised me. It shows what a woman is capable of."

"Sometimes there are motives which are stronger than the body," said Anne.

"Yes, that is true. I have proven that. A motive, an incentive, can overcome any weakness."

"You do not ask me what I mean?"

"You will tell me," said Dr. Holmes.

"Yes," she said. "I will tell you. My motive to-night was to keep all knowledge of the hour of my home-coming from any member of this household. I think I have

succeeded. You, of course, not being a member of the household, do not count."

"Are amateur photographs so absorbingly interesting as all that?" asked a mocking voice over Anne's shoulder.

"Not exactly," said Dr. Holmes. "But Miss Holloway's observations are worth as much, if not more, than the prints."

"Oh, I see!" David Beresford sat down deliberately on the arm of Anne's chair, his black coat-sleeve brushing her bare arm. "Let me hear, Anne. Rosalie has offended me so flagrantly that I refuse even to exchange glances with her."

Anne looked at the box of prints in her lap. There was no change in the calmness of her face, as she turned her dark head toward him, moving her body sideways in the chair so that his sleeve no longer touched her.

"You are intruding," she said slowly. "And I like you very much—at a distance. I feel more—wholesome."

The cold, insulting tone stung as she had meant it to do. He rose instantly.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and his face was scarlet. Dr. Maurice Holmes looked at Anne with so much consternation, so much astonishment, that in spite of her white anger

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the corners of her mouth twitched once more.

"Good heavens, Anne," he said, under his breath. "That was—awful!"

"Wasn't it?" she admitted. "But of course I don't like to say *very* much."

"*Very* much!" he repeated. "Why, Anne, you couldn't have said more! A frightfully embarrassing——"

"And unconventional scene," she added. "But convention has no weight when David Beresford is in question. It is as much as I can do to manage, with all my strength and will, to sit in the same room with him. Do you think, then, I shall hold a conversation with him?"

Dr. Holmes was silent a moment.

"There is something very wrong, Anne?"

"Very, very wrong. So wrong that my mind is in a tumult. I do not know how to right it without hurting those who have been all in all to me. For their sakes I must not listen to the anger that is consuming me, but to reason, and to counsel. And no one can help me or counsel me, but the one who has a spiritual right. I shall let him decide for me to-morrow. And until to-morrow comes I must keep my secret."

"You mean Father Walsh, of course?"

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"Yes. I mean Father Walsh. I have always had supreme confidence in myself. To-night I have lost it. Instinct, anger, and affection are fighting one another."

"Poor Annel!" said Dr. Holmes gently. "You are always ready to shoulder the burdens of other people. See Father Walsh, and let him counsel you—I have great respect for the judgment of that good priest of ours. But afterward——"

"Afterward?" She looked at him inquiringly.

"Let me help," he said impulsively. "Do not shut me out of anything—any trouble, any annoyance that comes into your life. It bothered me to-day to think that you were keeping something from me, especially when my whole desire is to be of assistance to you."

The tender note in his voice was very sweet to the tired girl.

"I knew you did not like it," she said. "But I also knew that I could explain when explanation was necessary. And I must hurt these dear, kind people who have been so good to me—that is the worst I have to bear."

"But must you? Is there no way out of

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it? After all, it may not really be your concern, Anne."

"It is not my concern, unless every helpless, weak, suffering creature has a claim on her stronger sisters. Then it is my concern," she said, her fearless glance meeting his. "I am not the one to shirk a duty, though God knows I would willingly shirk this one. ' But we'll talk of this later on—tomorrow. Now I can only speak in riddles and perhaps mystify you still more. I do want your help——"

"My help only—when my life is at your service?" He spoke in a low, passionate tone. "Tell me you know that, Anne?"

The color wavered across her white face.

"Yes," she said. "I know that."

"Well?"

"I thank you. I am glad of the gift—and proud of it."

"You will accept it, Anne?"

Again she colored, but this time said no word.

"You will accept it, Anne?" he urged, and there was a quiver in the low tones that showed that the heart of the man was full to overflowing. "You know what you are to me, Anne. Only you, Anne."

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“Yes,” she said, “I think I know—Maurice.”

That was all; but he leaned back in his chair, the light of an intense happiness on his face. The voices of the others sounded far away, unreal. To the tired unrest, the rebellion and anger which had stirred Anne’s pulses that momentous evening, there succeeded a calm quietude, a sense of joy which made all trials seem of little moment. Both were, for the time being, in a little world of their own—a happy world, which fortunate mortals are permitted to live in only once, forgetting life’s realities. Anne had not thought it would come like this—her lover’s declaration. And yet she would not have changed the time nor the place. She was content, satisfied. Dr. Holmes’s voice roused her.

“Shall I speak to Judge Beresford?”

“Oh, no!” The words gave Anne a shock. “Not to-night—not yet. Let us keep it to ourselves a little while.”

“As you will,” he answered. “But I can not be content until everything is settled, and I am assured of a date for our marriage. We will have a Christmas wedding, Anne——”

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Anne laughed.

"You are trying, at the very outset, to rob me of a woman's dearest privileges," she said. "Don't let us talk about that yet. We have much to settle before we can think of that time."

"Of course!" There was a look of content on his face. "I can let you talk so, knowing that it will all arrange itself *my* way."

Rosalie Walcott's pretty face, her eyes dancing with mischief, was thrust over Anne's shoulder.

"Time's up," she said; "if you folks haven't arrived at an understanding now you will have to postpone hostilities. Come out into the open, where you will be fair game. The evening is very nearly over and one can count all you've said."

Very nearly over, perhaps, but not yet ended.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ANNE TALKS TO DAVID BERESFORD

**N**OT even when leaving did Dr. Holmes get a chance to talk to Anne alone. Perhaps she purposely avoided him, for she saw the Judge and Mrs. Beresford exchange glances more than once—glances that sent the blood in tell-tale crimson to her cheeks. She was sure it was not because of anything in her manner. But Maurice Holmes could no more repress his delight in Anne than he could root Anne out of his heart. When at last he had said good-night to all in turn, Mary Beresford rose.

“I think I shall go upstairs,” she said. “Are you coming, Anne?”

“Yes,” said Anne. She was arranging the scattered music-sheets. “As soon as I get these in the cabinet.”

“I want a chat, Anne,” said Rosalie. “Be prepared.”

“It will be a short one,” warned Anne. “Remember that, Rose. I’m tired, dear.”

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She bent over the cabinet. "Wait a moment; I'm coming with you."

Rosalie did not wait. Judge Beresford was holding aside the portière, and she followed him and his wife. Anne was, presumably, the last to leave. As she straightened up and shut the cabinet her eyes fell on the open piano.

"Isn't she the careless child!" she said, half-aloud, going over to close the instrument. As she did so, a figure rose from a chair at the other side. It was David Beresford.

"I want a few minutes of your time," he said grimly, coldly. Anne stood erect, facing him.

"It is yours," she answered. "What do you want?"

"In the first place, and without beating about the bush, I want to know what you are going to do."

"What is there possible for me to do now?" asked Anne, in an even, unruffled tone. "My one hope was that I would be able to keep the whole black affair from Judge Beresford. That was my intention when I left Avona. But you have taken this opportunity away from me."

## ANNE TALKS TO DAVID 165

"But did you imagine I could let a thing slip out of my very fingers that way?"

"Not after hearing Mr. Howard talk this evening—no. I did not realize the risk I was taking, you see."

Her wild tone sent a strange gleam in his eyes.

"Listen, Anne—I have a proposition to make. Two million and a half is a lot of money. When will these people spend that much money? Why, they wouldn't know how to begin to spend it!"

A smile touched Anne's mouth.

"Is it necessary to spend it?" she said.

"For the good of the community, yes." He was regaining some of his airiness now under the influence of her seeming mildness. "So this is what I propose doing. You see, I'm her husband anyhow—so in a sort of way I'm entitled to those shares. I'll sell them and settle \$500,000 of the proceeds upon her, promising, besides, that she'll never be bothered even by a sight of me. And I'll give you the same amount, Anne. It will be a help to you and—Maurice Holmes."

"But I am not entitled to any of it," objected Anne quietly. "You are her husband—you feel that some of it is yours, per-

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haps. How could I take money which does not belong to me?"

"That will be all right. You must help me engineer the affair with Luke. It will be the easiest thing in the world for you to retain Norma's confidence—she was always a trusting little thing, for which I can thank heaven, or I would not have those precious shares in my possession at the present moment!"

He made no allusion to the way in which he had secured them!

"Judge Beresford will suspect——"

"If you leave the affair to me, and then do exactly as I tell you, there will be no suspicion. Every one will be satisfied, with the three of us—Norma and you and myself—comfortably well off for life! Why, Anne, I was positive you would see reason—think of it! Five hundred thousand dollars! You'll be rich, girl, and so will she! And, Anne," he lowered his tone a trifle, "I'm sorry about to-night. But you see I had to get my hands on them—no matter at what cost. I apologize, Anne. There was no harm intended—just a little of the drug in order to get away without any fuss."

"David, you must be insane—you *must*

## ANNE TALKS TO DAVID 167

be," said Anne. She swallowed hard. "I don't know how you can stand there and say things of this sort to me."

He looked at her quickly, suspiciously.

"What are you trying to do, Anne?"

"I don't know," she said. "The frightful truth—how shall I ever tell it to that good, noble man who is your brother?"

"Then you mean to tell him—you have meant right along to tell him?" The words were a snarl, the teeth gleamed through the drawn-back lips.

"What else is there to do?" she asked wonderingly. "And yet——"

"Yet——" He looked at her, suddenly hopeful.

"Go to him—yourself. Tell him the whole story. Tell him about your wife, your little baby. Send him to see them. Give him the shares which rightfully belong to them, and let him do as his own just heart will dictate. There has been no real crime on your part yet, David. Stop now on the verge of committing one. You have your name, the honor of your house to consider. Go to that poor little soul and beg her forgiveness for your cruelty. After all, you are the father of her child, and women are

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willing to overlook a good deal. She will not listen at first, perhaps, but in a little while she will turn to you—Lolita will draw you together. And it will mean no privation on your part. The shares are hers, the money will be hers, and, in the end, your own. Go, David, go,” she urged gently. “Go to Judge Beresford now—to-night. Will you, David?”

He watched her through half-closed lids, weighing every word she spoke. When she finished, his head dropped forward on his hands. He sat quietly before her, and she waited, standing there, patiently, wondering—but without room for compunction or pity in her heart. She knew that if this appeal was of use that it was only because his common sense told him there was nothing else to do—there was no other course open. So, to save Judge Beresford’s pride, she put the chance into his hands.

“Anne, he will not listen to me—he will spurn me,” he muttered.

“That, of course,” she said evenly. “But you do not expect him to congratulate you?”

“I don’t know—I don’t know how to begin such a story—I don’t know——”

He hesitated. “To go to him now—to-

## ANNE TALKS TO DAVID 169

night . . . Will you give me time, Anne? Let me think it over . . . I might have known . . . you——”

The words choked on his lips, and yet he was afraid to let her see the rage that ran like wildfire through his veins. If he dared he would have taken her by the throat. . . .

“No one has ever interfered with me yet who didn’t suffer for it, Anne Holloway!” The words escaped him in spite of himself.

“No,” she answered steadily. “But God has taken care of me so far—and I’m pretty sure He’ll take care of me in the future.”

“God!” he mocked. “God! He surely did take care of you to-night or you’d be lying with your face to the stars in Beresford woods. I wish the fellow had killed you.”

“You may wish so now—but not when you get over your passion. Life would be very unpleasant for you if my death was traced to you, as of course it would be. And no matter how much the Judge loves you he wouldn’t overlook murder.”

“You have the upper hand,” said David Beresford, and there was an evil gleam in his eyes—Anne, looking at them, saw, in that distorted, angry face, the depths to which he had fallen.

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"You still have the one loophole of escape," she answered. "I give it to you—not for your sake, but for your brother's."

"I must plead to you, I suppose—and accept your terms. Will you"—the words seemed to choke him, but they came at last—"give me until to-morrow to tell him? I would like to think affairs over to-night. You will understand that it isn't the easiest thing in the world——"

"I understand," said Anne. "Until to-morrow, then. I shall say nothing to Judge Beresford before noon to-morrow. But at noon I shall tell him if you have not already done so." She went toward the door. "I would advise you, too, to see me before you go in to him."

"You would see and hear my humiliation, of course."

"No," said Anne, in the same gentle voice which she had used during the entire conversation. "But I am anxious to know that the papers are delivered to Judge Beresford."

"The papers are safe enough, Anne."

"Thank God, they are—safer than you think."

"What—what do you mean?"

## ANNE TALKS TO DAVID 171

"Why, that they are not in *your* possession, at least."

"Not in my——"

"Of course I never dreamed for a moment that you would get off at Deepdale station in order to trace Louise Duchard. I never dreamed that I was being spied upon and followed into Avona, and that some one was shrewd enough to know that I had placed the precious papers in my leather camera case. I am such a simpleton, of course, that I did not provide for the proper conveyance and delivery of those papers to one who could be trusted to take care of them! And also, of course, I do not know that David Beresford has so far lowered himself as to hire Harkins, a servant, to help him in the evil he could not accomplish alone!"

The veins stood out thick on the man's forehead; his fingers closed and unclosed nervously. But Anne's hand was on the portière, her foot upon the threshold.

"So the only possible course open to you is the one I have suggested. Judge Beresford will take care of the Buena Vista Copper interests—and you may profit materially in the end, if you are wise. And before I bid you good-night I want to tell you that if

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you went to Avona it would do you no possible good as far as the shares are concerned, for they are no longer in the possession of Louise Duchard or your unfortunate wife. Not even to save their very lives could they give you the Buena Vista papers. I tell you this in case you may be meditating a midnight visit and surprise."

She let the portière drop behind her. He stared at the place where she had stood, at the dark-red curtain which hung between him and her departing figure. With eyes dark with evil hate and rage, he stared, not doubting that she had spoken the truth. She had spoken the truth! The fortune that he had thought within his very grasp had vanished. He did not doubt that she was sure. She was *sure!* Who, then, had the shares? Luke, in all probability.

There was no evading exposure at last. In spite of his anger he was forced to smile bitterly. He had reached the end. Luke would probably send for Louise and Norma and the child, and take care of them, while he would be banished, penniless, forbidden ever to show his face. . . . And this he owed to Anne Holloway!

## ANNE TALKS TO DAVID 173

He clenched his fist and shook it at the door.

"I will remember," he said. "Oh, yes. I will remember—and I—will—pay—you—back!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### WHAT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT

**F**OR a long, long time David Beresford sat crouched in the soft chair which was Mary Beresford's exclusive property, his elbows resting on the table, his eyes staring into nothingness. Then he heard old Jordan moving about in the big hall, heard the clicking of bolts and locks as he closed up for the night. The knowledge that Jordan was coming in roused him. He stood up, stretching himself, as the old servitor appeared in the doorway.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. David, sir," said Jordan drawing back. "I did not think there was any one in here."

"I am going now, Jordan," answered David. "You can lock up in here, if you want to."

"Yes, sir."

"Good-night, Jordan."

"Good-night, sir."

With lagging steps David Beresford went

up the broad stairs to his own apartments. There was absolute silence in the great house, broken only by the solemn ticking of the massive clock in the lower hall. It began to strike as he opened his door, a mellow, musical boom, and he stood until he had counted the hour. It was eleven. He went inside and snapped on the electric light.

Anne's astounding declaration had robbed his brain, usually so quick in perception, of all reasoning or even thinking powers. Money was his god. The tale of Lawyer Howard that night had made him almost delirious with joy. Two and a half millions! What would he not do with that—he who was allowed a paltry ten thousand dollars a year, doled out to him, bit by bit, niggard fashion, by his over-careful, pious brother! Ten thousand a year—two and a half millions! He had contrasted the sums with beating heart, beside himself with the thought that so huge an amount was almost within his grasp!

David Beresford was like a man who had suffered a great bereavement. His feet dragged as he slowly crossed the room to his bureau, and pulled out from its top drawer

the sheaf of papers which Harkins, his tool, had delivered to him that night. He had not waited to count them or to look at them, but now he glanced over them one by one. "The To-nah-pi Silver Lode," "The Williams," "Rosebud Oil Gusher," "The Texas Tilly Copper," "The Mexican Ruby Mine," "The Pan-Alaska Gold Vein"—yes, there were mines enough and lodes enough, but the Buena Vista Copper was conspicuous by its absence.

With an impatient gesture David Beresford threw them back and closed the drawer. Then lighting a cigar he sat down again to think. Had he really reached the end of his rope, checked by a woman? Just when he had succeeded in tracing the two to Avona, just when success was in his grasp, just when he had resolved that he would secure the treasure for his own use and to serve his own purposes! To win it he would have stooped to any crime that he could commit in safety. Had Louise not been so vigilant, so honest, there were schemes innumerable which he would have put into execution. Without the watchful Louise the best place for a nervous, hysterical creature like Norma was a sanitarium, and the child could be very

easily provided for. But Louise was always in the way—always. And now, a thousand times more formidable, Anne loomed upon his horizon. Anne knew all. Anne threatened him. And what would Luke Beresford say when he told him the truth? For gloss it over as he might, the truth must be told.

He sat quiet, immovable, his eyes half-closed. There was the alternative. Luke would accept his story, take care of the shares, send for Norma and the little one, and banish him. He could decree his own banishment before Luke suggested it; he could let matters rest, and trust to the soft heart of the little fool to forgive all, even as Anne had said. The thought sickened him, for he detested his unfortunate wife. He had never cared for her, and now the thought of pretending even friendship—

Faugh! But two million and a half! He could tolerate a Fiji Islander for the little while necessary to secure it. There was no choice, there was no other way. Anne had him in her power; he must yield to it. But God help her if it ever came in his way to pay her back!

He dropped the cigar, which had gone

out, stretched himself lazily, and began to undress. As he took his watch from his pocket he glanced at it, then gave a start of dismay. The Judge and his wife had given him a very handsome locket, containing a valuable diamond, during the last Christmas season. He stood thinking a moment; he remembered now that in standing up to speak to Anne at the piano he had felt something drop to the ground. He would go at once and see.

He slipped on his black evening coat and went down the stairs. It took but a second to discover the locket just where he thought it might be. He picked it up, snapped off the light again, and was on the point of going out when he heard the swish of a woman's skirt along the upper hall. He drew back and stood close against the wall. The steps came down the stairs, hesitatingly, paused outside the door, stopped altogether as the great clock struck the first note of the midnight hour, and waited until the last note had died away. David Beresford scarcely dared to breathe. Was this Anne? Was she meeting some one—Louise, perhaps, or even Norma herself. . . .

The girl, whoever she might be, passed him

by, running with quick steps to the long French windows, one of which she unbolted. A second later she was out on the portico. Just as she appeared a low, cautious whistle was borne upward from the shrubbery. The girl bent over the broad balustrade.

"Harvey! It is you?"

"Yes. Are you ready?"

"Of course. Come to the front steps. Where is the car?"

"I dared not drive it any way near—but it is only a short distance—— What is the matter?"

For David Beresford, advancing from the shadows of the room, had stolen noiselessly behind the girl, and thrown an arm about her. A stifled cry escaped her; she struggled, and her silk hood fell back, revealing Rosalie Walcott's terrified face.

"Rosalie! What are you doing here?" he demanded sternly.

"David! Oh, heavens, how you frightened me!" Her hands caught at his arm, and he could feel her shaking in his grasp.

"What are you doing? Where are you going?" he again demanded. And then, as a young man bounded up on the piazza, "What do you want?"

"I beg your pardon, but your grammar is execrable," said a half-laughing voice. "Go back again to your silent tomb, Dave, and don't be a spoil-sport."

"Harvey Birdsall, by all that's wonderful! Old chap, where did you come from? I thought you were in Aiken."

"I stayed over. Rosalie and I are going together, though, as soon as we can. I have the license in my pocket——"

"But in heaven's name, what do you mean by this secrecy? I never dreamed of such a thing! Rosalie——"

"We haven't any time to waste," broke in the young man impatiently. "The clergyman is waiting for us, the train leaves at 8:10, and it is now after midnight. Explanations may be due, but are not in order."

"Come along and see it through, David," suggested Rosalie mischievously.

"I will, by Jove!" said David Beresford quickly.

"And to-morrow morning Anne will think it is you and I who have eloped," she continued. "That certainly will be a joke."

"I will get my overcoat—I'll have to cover up this white shirt," said David Beresford.

"You two start ahead. I'll follow. Which way is the car?"

"Pointed city way," said Harvey Birdsall. "Go on, Dave. Glad to have you if you care to come, but we won't wait, I warn you."

"No, don't; I might have an apoplectic stroke before I get upstairs," said David Beresford grimly. "I will, if there's any more surprises in store for me this night."

He turned, and went quickly back into the house through the open window. With cautious steps he re-entered his own room, took his light overcoat from the closet, thrust his wallet into his pocket, and turned to go. So far he had looked upon this unforeseen occurrence as a welcome diversion, an unexpected adventure which he would help to a happy conclusion. But now, as he was going out "to see it through," as he put it, an idea struck him, so daring, so completely unexpected, that it fairly staggered him.

Time—he wanted time—and here was the opportunity placed within his grasp. Once let him get those shares negotiated and Luke Beresford himself would never hear of or see him again! Yes, time was being given into his hands, time and a chance to use it. And all lay in those few words of foolish Rosalie.

"To-morrow morning Anne will think it is you and I who have eloped!" she had said.

In an instant the crafty brain grasped the slim opening which these words offered. He fairly ran to the dresser, caught up a pencil, and wrote on one of his cards:

"ANNE: You will hear from me—and Rosalie—shortly. I have written to you, giving you a chance. You had better keep silent about *all* until you read my letter. Then do as you please. D. B."

He put the card in an envelope, sealed it quickly, and wrote Anne's name on the outside. Then he tiptoed his way along the hall. When he reached Anne's door he stooped and cautiously shoved the envelope underneath. Once more he went down the stairs and drew the window shut behind him. He was young and active, and the distance between the two who had preceded him was speedily lessened. In about ten minutes he saw them ahead of him, and caught the dull glow of an automobile lamp.

"Here is David at last!" said Rosalie, it seemed with a sigh of relief.

"For which I am very sorry," said the young man promptly. "I wonder who's doing this eloping, anyhow?"

"I'm helping," said David Beresford, "as you'll find out soon if you're not careful. You had better not waste any words, but get away as quickly as you can, unless you want the fair maiden torn from your loving arms."

"Oh!" gasped Rosalie. "They have discovered us!"

"Yes," said David Beresford. "And you know what Luke's big car is capable of when he wants to let it out. Let me take the wheel until we get farther on, Harvey. I know the country better than you do."

It was over an hour before the tearing pace lessened. They met few machines, and none passed them, which was in itself remarkable, as the roads through Beresford and Deepdale were great favorites with motorists of all classes. At last, when there seemed no further danger of pursuit, David Beresford lessened the speed, and leaned back in his seat.

"Will you youngsters tell me what you propose doing?" he asked.

"We are going to get married," said Harvey Birdsall promptly.

"But why in the name of conscience didn't you stay at home and get married properly?"

There was an embarrassed little silence.

"We knew they would never consent," said Rosalie at last.

"Who would never consent?"

"Uncle Luke and Aunt Mary and—and Anne, especially."

"That doesn't help me out any," said David Beresford.

"Why, Harvey isn't a Catholic."

"Harvey—~~isn't—a~~—Catholic! Oh! And you're running away on that account? Who is going to marry you?"

Rosalie did not answer—there was a little pucker between her eyes, her small mouth was pressed together.

"I have picked out the clergyman," said Harvey Birdsall. "He is the pastor of one of the big Methodist churches in the city, and is used to this sort of thing." He pressed the shrinking figure closed to his side. "My own brave little girl hasn't let any silly prejudice stand between us! What difference can religion mean to two people who love each other?" he ended.

David Beresford laughed.

"I'd advise you to ask Anne," he said. "I certainly owe Anne no affection; she's never been any too friendly toward me. But

I wouldn't like to be in Rosalie's shoes when Anne meets you both."

"Once we are man and wife, Anne has no further control over Rosalie—even if she ever had any," said Harvey Birdsall.

"She never had much—you might as well try to tame a humming-bird as Rosalie," said David Beresford. "Still——"

He was silent. Rosalie sat back in the luxurious cushions of the car, and turned her face away. She had turned pale and now closed her eyes quickly to hide the rush of tears that came to them. It had seemed very romantic, this midnight marriage; the secret correspondence which had lasted for the last six months had been the very spice of life itself. But now when all their planning was to be so successful, the taste of it in Rosalie's mouth seemed bitter. She had not been to the sacraments in three months. Her last confession to Father Walsh was even yet a stinging memory, when she told him that she was actually contemplating marriage with one not of her faith, and concealing it from her lawful guardians. She would not soon forget the words he used when she refused to give up this affection which meant only evil to her own soul.

And Anne! Anne had always been so tender with her. Unyielding, perhaps, where religious practices were concerned, but tender and gentle! What would Anne say or do? What would happen in the future if her marriage was a failure? "You will no longer be a member of the Church—you will be living in sin," Father Walsh had said. Rosalie gave a little gasp, and sat up-right.

"Harvey, I—I——"

"What is it, my darling? Why, Rosalie, your hands are like ice! Poor little girl—it will soon be over—very soon."

"Harvey, I can't do it!"

"Can't—do—— Come, little girl, lean your head on my shoulder. You are trembling—nervous. Don't worry, my own brave sweetheart."

He drew her to him gently, and for a second time the pretty blonde head rested against his shoulder. Then Rosalie straightened up with a miserable laugh.

"It's no use, Harvey. I simply can't do it. If I stood with you before any minister to-night, I would have to refuse to marry you. Harvey, I can't, I can't. It's all wrong."

"Dave, stop the car. Listen to her—turn around here. Do you hear? Rosalie is refusing to marry me——"

"Rosalie!" David Beresford brought the machine to an abrupt standstill. "Good Lord, you can't back out now. Think of the scandal! It's too late—you'll have to go on with it."

"I can't," said Rosalie, beginning to sob in a childish, heart-broken fashion. "I can't. It would be too awful. It's all right to give up Anne and Aunt Mary and all the others, but oh, Harvey, I can't give up God—not even for you. And I won't," she added, rebelliously, stamping her foot with the flash of temper that always followed her tears. "I won't. I'm going home."

Harvey Birdsall's face was white with passionate anger.

"Very well," he said. "You shall do as you please."

"Rosalie, my dear child, it is after two o'clock now. It will be nearly five before we can reach Beresford Court again. It won't do," said David Beresford. "Come, listen to reason. This is only a mood—she is upset, Harvey. We'll get to the clergyman's as quickly as possible—see, we are on

the outskirts of the city now—and Rosalie will go through with it. She was always a little soldier. It is only the really brave people who are afraid before going into battle.”

But Rosalie shook her head.

“I won’t get married to-night, or ever,” she said. “It’s no use talking to me. I don’t want to go back to Beresford Court—I don’t want you to go back. I’m going to my old academy—Mother de Chantal will take me in until I can write to Anne and Aunt Mary. And that settles it,” she added, with a click of her tiny white teeth which emphasized the remark.

Appeal, reason, urging, anger—all were of no avail. In the end Rosalie had her way. What Mother de Chantal thought, hastily summoned at such an hour by the shocked Sister Portress, neither of the two young men ever learned. But she greeted Rosalie with the utmost tenderness. Harvey Birdsall did not go in—David Beresford saw her safe inside the portals.

“You will explain to the good Mother,” David Beresford said. “And do not write, for I shall go to Beresford Court at once and bring Anne back with me. Do not do anything until you hear from me to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PROPHECY CROSS

**A**NNE was tired when she reached her own room after her interview with David Beresford, too tired, indeed, to do more than undress hastily, drop down on her knees for a few prayers—one of them a heartfelt thanksgiving to the heavenly Mother for preserving her through all the dangers of that perilous day. She locked her door then, and was almost asleep when Rosalie came to it, tapping softly.

“I’m in bed, Rose, and I’m tired,” she called out sleepily. “Wait until to-morrow, dear.”

She remembered that much in the morning, but no more. She did not listen for Rosalie’s answer; she was in slumberland almost as soon as she had spoken to her, and all that night she slept heavily, dreamlessly. She woke at the usual hour, but drifted off again almost without opening her eyes. It was after eight when at last she sat up in

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bed and glanced at the clock. She could scarcely believe it possible.

"And I feel as if I had hardly slept at all," she said to herself. She dressed slowly, her mind, of course, completely occupied with the ordeal before her. To Anne it was an ordeal, indeed. She could see the expression on Luke Beresford's face—the hurt looking through the sternness, and she shivered.

"Oh, I wish it could be avoided," she said. "I wish it could be avoided."

But she knew that that was impossible.

Breakfast in the Beresford household was a most informal affair, for it was the only meal to which one could come at whatever hour he or she pleased—any time after seven, any time before nine, was the rule made to suit the industrious and the lazy members of the family. Yet even so, a certain amount of regularity was observed. Mrs. Beresford, unless very much indisposed, the Judge, and Anne, breakfasted promptly at seven—Anne leaving directly after for Father Walsh's Mass at eight o'clock. Neil drifted in between seven and seven-thirty. Rosalie—and David Beresford, when he was at the Court—barely managed to get any

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breakfast at all, as the Judge often remarked.

Mr. Howard made one of the early risers this morning, taking Anne's place. Neil, too, was late, and was just finishing when Anne appeared.

"Oh, oh!" he said, pointing a finger at her. "Who's lazy now, I'd like to know!"

"Have all the rest been down?" asked Anne.

"All but Uncle David and Rosalie. Mother's out in the rose garden, and said you'd find her there if you wanted her, while father and Mr. Howard are in the study."

He went out whistling, to put his head in at the door a few seconds later.

"Frank Minturn is giving away the collie pups; his father won't let him keep only two. I expect to bring one home to-day, Anne."

"Did you ask your mother?"

"Why, no——"

"Or your father——"

"Now, Anne, it's only a puppy."

"Puppies grow up, Neil, and you have six dogs in the stable now."

"Yes, but I hate that kind of a number—seven's luckier! I'll tell you, Anne, I'll fetch him home with me and we'll look him

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over and if we don't like him I know a fellow is just crazy to get him."

Anne smiled a little, but did not answer. Every time Judge Beresford went to the stables he discovered a new dog, he said, and he wondered if Neil intended to keep a home for canines. Anne knew what "looking him over" meant. When Neil explained the good points of a dog he had a splendid imagination.

Meanwhile Anne had no idea of the scene transpiring behind the closed doors of Judge Beresford's study. The lawyer had been arranging his papers, and deciding one or two little points which had been overlooked the preceding day.

"That big boy of mine will see Harmon himself," said the Judge. "I hope this turns out well—it's a great chance, just what he needs. I'll make any concession to Harmon. David's the best fellow in the world, but he can't seem to get settled. Harmon is so genial and so level-headed! There never was such an opportunity."

"If David takes it," said Howard, almost with indifference, as he put his bag on the table and opened it.

"What an old croaker you are!" said

Judge Beresford. "Weren't you ever young?"

"Yes, I was, and so were you—but you didn't need any urging to 'get settled.'"

"We both met the right kind of girls," said Judge Beresford in a low voice.

"Bosh!" said Lawyer Howard crisply. "You mean we didn't go running after the wrong kind."

"Well, we can't all be alike," said the Judge, with a sigh. "You've got much of the papers you want now. Run through them quickly."

But Howard was already doing so, and as his practised fingers slipped through each neat pile, he checked them off in the memorandum book he had before him.

"I guess I can get away," he said. "I'll write to you, or wire, if necessary, but I think everything will be all right. That Bu-Vi business has me annoyed. It's taking up so much of our time, and the results, with all our work, will amount to nothing. A good half, mind you! Yours is only a drop in the bucket. I've got the consent of every other stockholder to close with the Pelham people for five million if I can find the missing John Smith or his heirs, con-

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found him! There's a bonus in it for me, too, that will be worth while—I hate to confess my failure.”

“I hope you don't have to,” said Judge Beresford. “But you're not the sort of a chap to know what that word means, Howard. Good-by and good luck to you, and let me know how it turns out, will you? But here, wait! By Jove, you were going off again without that cross! Open up the bag and drop it in.” He handed the lawyer the morocco case. Mr. Howard dropped it in, and then reached down a second after, to unclasp it, his professional caution exerting itself. When the cover opened he stared down with indifference—an expression which changed quickly.

“Where *is* the cross, Beresford?”

“Where is—I just gave it to you.”

Mr. Howard lifted out the open case. It was empty. Then he took every paper from the bag once more, and turned the bag upside down. The cross had disappeared. Judge Beresford stood watching him, too dumbfounded to open his mouth.

“It's gone!” said Howard.

Both men turned toward the safe, the same impulse moving them. But there was

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nothing to indicate that the cross could be concealed in it.

"Wait," said Judge Beresford. "Mary might have—it isn't likely, but I'll go see."

He went out, coming back in a few seconds.

"No, she hasn't seen it—I couldn't say much. I don't want to alarm her, for she's superstitious about the thing. Howard, train or no train, we've got to find that cross if it's in this room."

"Yes," said Howard briefly. They stood in front of the safe, and then, one by one, Judge Beresford cleared out every compartment. Not a book, not a scrap of paper was left unopened. The search was useless from the start—both men felt it to be so, but they worked side by side, and only when the last package of papers had been restored to its place did the Judge motion the lawyer to be seated.

"Howard," he said, "the cross is gone, and some one has taken it. Yet I put it in there with my own hands yesterday—and the case was there last night when I locked the safe at seven o'clock."

"The case, yes. But the cross?"

"That I don't know." The Judge's face

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was grave. "There's about four hundred dollars in the money drawer—not a cent is missing."

"When did you see the cross last?"

"At three o'clock yesterday. Anne was in. She went to the safe herself and got Johnnie Ward's papers."

"When did David go away?"

"He left around half-past two—I'm not sure when he got back. But of course there's no one in the house—I mean of my own family——"

"You have no suspicion of any of the servants?"

"Why, no—I don't know. I haven't thought. There's only one or two new ones——"

Howard was silent, his eyes bent gravely on the table, his fingers beating time, as if to invisible music.

"Beresford, I don't want to be suspicious, if I can help it, even if it is my trade. And I know you're going to jump on me just as sure as you're sitting there. But I'm entitled to my own opinions."

"Certainly," said the Judge. His voice turned cold as ice, his face set in hard, mask-

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like lines. Howard knew the indications well.

"I suppose you think I'm going to accuse David now," he said.

"Well—" began the Judge, a little taken aback. "For the moment——"

"I'm going to do even worse than that—but it's between you and me only. Is that understood?"

"Positively."

"Very well then. Do you know what I was going to do with that cross when I got back to the city?"

"Why, no," said Judge Beresford, in astonishment.

"Take it to an expert."

"Take it to an expert! What for?"

"I am convinced that the cross which you were given yesterday was not the famous Beresford heirloom. I could have sworn it when I looked at it through the magnifying glass—but I was content to let it go, promising myself that I would have the opinion of some one who knew more about such things than I do."

Judge Beresford was silent now, looking straight before him with eyes that saw nothing. But he was thinking deeply.

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"What was your impression when you first thought that?" he asked.

"My first thought, believing David's story that he had locked it up in the Amsterdam safe—improbable and unlikely as such a thing could be!—was that some clever swindler had got his hands on it and substituted a very nice imitation. Or, perhaps, if David's story were not the truth, which seemed most likely, the man—or woman—to whom he had loaned it or with whom he had left it, had played the same trick upon him. That was my impression, then—always with the hope, you understand, lurking in the back of my brain somewhere, that I might be too suspicious, too——"

He hesitated.

"Go on," said Judge Beresford sharply. "You must be open with me now, Howard—I demand it."

"Something in David's manner seemed to confirm this. You will remember you made me look at it closely—and it was only when I scrutinized it in that way that the thought came. I was a little bit flustered for a moment, and when I glanced up I saw David looking at me in a peculiar manner—a queer look, it was. But looks count for nothing."

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"No," said Judge Beresford. "That was your impression yesterday. Have you changed it?"

"Very little."

"What is the change?"

"I think now that David suspected my intentions—and purloined the cross in order to forestall me."

"Good Lord in heaven!" said Judge Beresford. "Good Lord in heaven!"

Howard spoke no other word. The Judge got up from his chair. With crushing suddenness he remembered his wife's odd exclamation; how she had carried the cross to the window to look at it more attentively, saying indeed that at first it had felt as if it were not the same. That had been her impression. He himself could see no difference in it.

"Well, Howard," he said at last. "What are we going to do now?"

Howard shrugged his shoulders.

"That depends more upon you than upon me."

"If, as you say, the original cross has been—disposed of, it would be in what fashion?"

"Circumstances would control that," said Mr. Howard cautiously. "It would be sold

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as it was to some one leaving the country. If sold in the United States it has been broken up."

"You have a description of the stones?"

"Yes."

"All right, then. We'll say nothing further about the cross, Howard. If your suspicions are correct—God forgive me, I am almost afraid to doubt them!—the more quietly we work the better. I want you to put the very best men you can get on this thing. It must be kept quiet—for Mrs. Beresford's sake, particularly, as I think it would actually worry her. You will do this, Howard?"

"At once," said the lawyer. "I'm—I'm awfully sorry, Judge." He extended his hand. "I'd give a hundred dollars this minute to be able to say I was a suspicious old fool."

"I'd give half I own to be able to tell you to your face that you were," said Judge Beresford. "I'm fighting myself now for my suspicions of the boy—I won't believe it, not a word, not a word!"

"No," said Howard. "Meanwhile, I am putting this case in my bag. You have not opened it—I shall not do so. We have not

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the faintest idea, either of us, that the case does not contain the cross. This in itself may tend to allay all fear. It may have been pawned, you know, temporarily, to tide an extravagant fellow over a crisis——”

“Yes, yes,” said Judge Beresford eagerly. “Even that, bad as it is, would be a splendid thing compared to the—other. Yes, that may be, that may be! You’re not so bad, after all, Howard—you leave me a little hope.”

“Yes,” said Howard. “The family will be under the impression that the cross is back safely in the vault—you will know how best to convey that impression. This will lead to greater security. Meanwhile——”

“Meanwhile?”

“I know a chap who is, among other things, an excellent landscape gardener. Don’t you want something new for next year? The ground might be looked over now? Things here could be watched in that way.”

“Yes,” said Judge Beresford. “But you won’t neglect the other part?”

“No,” said Howard.

“Thank you. He is young, foolish, a spendthrift, if you like—but not—not a—

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not dishonest, Howard. A man will do much for money. But this man happens to be my brother."

Lawyer Howard was much touched.

"Foolishness and dishonesty are far apart," he said. "Perhaps it will all turn out for the best, Judge. The lesson may serve him. If he's, in earnest about the Harmon affair—he may come and make a clean breast of it."

"If he would! If he only would! I'd forgive him—anything—I think."

## CHAPTER XVI

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION”

**A**NNE finished her breakfast leisurely enough, planning in her own mind how she would regulate her affairs for the day. First, she would look over the papers which Louise had given her, and arrange them before giving them to the Judge. She heard the hall clock strike nine with a little satisfaction—Mr. Howard would not be able to get a train now until 11:30, and by that time David Beresford would have made a clean breast of everything, and the romance of Bu-Vi Copper could come to a happy conclusion. She rose precipitately when she thought of David—he had not had his breakfast yet, and he would be coming for it now. She did not want to meet him again until she was forced to.

That afternoon she and Maurice Holmes would go to Avona together with happy news for Norma Beresford and Louise.

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And she must see Father Walsh; his approval was absolutely necessary. The affair had really been taken out of her hands; there was no further need for consultation, no longer any chance for advice. What was done had to be done quickly. She had seen the only road to take last evening, and she had taken it. A flush mounted to her cheeks as she went upstairs, back to her own room. He had tried to bribe her! Bribe her! He must, indeed, have very little comprehension of the word "honesty," when he dared suggest such a thing to her—to her, of all people.

"But that is the way," thought Anne. "The actions of others are seen through the colors in which our own are clothed. Still, I wonder if he thought, even for a moment, that I would—Yes, Jordan—what is it?"

"A letter for you, Miss Anne—by special messenger. The man is waiting."

Anne glanced at the oddly familiar superscription on the letter handed to her, and then went on her way. As she opened the door of her room, however, she noticed the envelope lying on the floor. She picked it up quickly.

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"'Anne!' For me? But from whom? What——" She tore it open hurriedly.

"ANNE:

"You will hear from me—and Rosalie—shortly. I have written to you, giving you a chance. You had better keep silent about *all* until you read my letter. Then do as you please.

"D. B."

Anne read the words over twice—the first time too utterly bewildered to grasp their meaning. "You will hear from me—and Rosalie!" From whom? "*D. B.*" David? Not David!

The breath caught in her throat—a little choking grasp, and with the fleetness of the wind she ran out into the hall again and was down at the end of the corridor, rapping at Rosalie's door. No response came. She turned the knob. It yielded to her touch. Yes, it was Rosalie's room, but Rosalie's bed had not been slept in, while all about was the evidence of flight. The drawers of the bureau were opened, the closet doors stood ajar. And then, while Anne stood, gasp-

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ing, panting, as the full horror of this dreadful catastrophe burst upon her, she saw a white paper pinned to the pillow. It took her but an instant to pick it up and fairly devour the few words it contained.

"MY DEAR PEOPLE:

"I will be married when you get this. Forgive me—we love each other so, and I know you would never consent. I will write to you in a very little while. Please don't be hard on us.

"Your ever-loving

"ROSALIE."

For a moment the room swam before Anne Holloway's eyes, and her face was ghastly. Rosalie! Rosalie and David Beresford! She looked again at the note—and at the card, crushed in her palm, with the words which she had been unable to understand. "I have written to you, giving you a chance—I have written to you, giving you a chance!" What did he mean? What did it all mean?

And then she remembered the letter by special messenger. She closed the door behind her softly, and went back again. The

letter was indeed from David Beresford. It was short and to the point.

"You know now what has happened. Rosalie has eloped with me, believing that I have secured a divorce. I have told her that I was unable to get a license yet, and she is now with friends of mine—good, respectable people, where she will be safe. I will give you Rosalie to-day if you send me the Buena Vista Copper shares. If I do not hear from you before three o'clock, we shall be quietly married and start on our honeymoon. The messenger who brings this letter is absolutely trustworthy. He has been instructed to take the 11:30 train back from Beresford with or without certain papers which you are to give him. You see, Anne, Rosalie's future lies entirely in your hands. The price is none of your concern, anyway, and if I negotiate the certificates I shall provide handsomely for Norma."

Anne read the letter slowly. Then she went out into the hall and down to Jordan.

"Where is the person who brought this?" she asked.

"In the little room. He said he was to

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wait for an answer." Jordan looked at her anxiously. "Miss Anne, please tell me, there is nothing wrong?"

"I—I hope not, Jordan," said Anne, trying to smile—but the smile was worse than an outburst of tears. She went toward the little room. Could it be possible that it was only yesterday that she had seen Louise Duchard in this very apartment? A man rose at her entrance—an ordinary working-man, she realized, glancing at him.

"Do you know the gentleman who gave you this letter to me?" she asked. The man seemed a little timid in the presence of this white-faced, keen-eyed young woman, who spoke so sharply.

"'Twas my pal, Billy Sharp, gave it to me, miss, and said I was to wait for an answer. 'Twas from a firm who had employed him, and who was recommending Billy and me to get some work out here. For that reason I'm to wait."

"Yes," said Anne mechanically. "There will be an answer—but there will be no train until 11.30. Meanwhile, Jordan will see that you get a warm breakfast. Will you take him downstairs, Jordan, please? He goes back on the 11.30."

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"Yes, Miss Anne," said Jordan, but his eyes followed Anne with great concern. How slowly she walked! How frightfully downhearted she seemed! What had happened? If Anne had been asked that question just then she could hardly tell. Her heart and brain were on fire. Rosalie, poor, foolish little butterfly! How had this hateful creature obtained such a hold on her? And oh, why, why had she not opened the door to her last night! If only she could have foreseen or known!

There were the conditions—Rosalie's honor lay in her hands, the price of a few slips of paper. If she sent David Beresford the Buena Vista certificates Rosalie would be home that night, and her flight kept secret from every one. No one, not even the Judge or Mary Beresford, need know that she had ever been away. It would be the easiest thing in the world to account for her non-appearance at luncheon and she herself could meet her at the station later. Thus would Rosalie be saved from the scandal sure to ensue if the truth were ever known.

Besides that, what was Norma Beresford to her? What was Norma Beresford compared to Rosalie, little Rosalie, her dead sis-

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ter's one treasure? How could she face that good and loving one, knowing that she had not done all she could to save her child from destruction? Not alone of body, but of soul? They could provide well for Norma Beresford, even if David refused to do so. She would tell the Judge all, all, as soon as Rosalie came back to her safe and sound. Oh, she would give everything she possessed in the world to hear that girlish laugh, that musical voice, to see that golden head come into her room once more! Yes, Anne thought, she would give up every joy she had ever thought to hold in her heart if Rosalie came back to her safe and sound!

But there was one thought that Anne, the proud, could not give up. Love and joy, perhaps, and peace of mind and service, all these Anne would yield on the altar of devotion to her own. But above and beyond these things stood honor. Honor! Higher even than gratitude, than friendship, than deep-seated affection, than consideration for the helpless, stood honor! Norma Beresford had trusted in her honor. Louise Duchard had turned to her because of her honor. And now, at its first real trial, was her honor to fail?

## **"NOT INTO TEMPTATION" 211**

**"I have no time to take counsel now, sweet Lady of Victory," she said, with a mournful smile, kneeling before the little white altar on which rested the pretty statue of Our Lady, to whom Anne had such great devotion. "I can only listen to my heart and my head. Oh, Mother, my dearest Mother, counsel me."**

**If her head conquered what would become of Rosalie? Too well she knew David Beresford! Too well she knew that he was capable of carrying out every word he had written—and then what of Rosalie? Rosalie, the heedless, the careless! Why had she not taken more thought for Rosalie? She was so young, so bright, so sweet—surely they should have seen that Beresford Court was dull, and that with a man like David Beresford always to the fore there was room for mischief!**

**Yet Norma Beresford had trusted her!**

**Insistent, unerring, the thought obtruded itself. And Rosalie was the price which Anne must pay to keep the trust intact. She threw herself on the floor beside her bed, and buried her face in her hands. She did not cry—she felt that she would never cry again. Everything was being forced upon**

## 212 "NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

her at once. She must tell Luke Beresford all—and how she had dreaded sitting in the room when he was told anything! She must let Rosalie go! She must bring shame and disgrace upon the house of Beresford!

"And lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil. Amen."

She rose to her feet, went to the window, and then, with unfaltering steps, walked back to the little altar. In its upper drawer she had placed the papers which Louise Duchard had given her—the only place for them, she thought, at Our Lady's feet. They were there, just as she had left them. Picking them up in her hand, and taking David's card and letter and Rosalie's note she went down to the study in which Luke Beresford and Lawyer Howard were in close consultation. They had just finished the conversation recorded in our last chapter when Anne's knock sounded upon the panel.

"Who is that?" called the Judge. "We are very busy just now——"

"It is I, Anne. Please open—open quickly."

Mr. Howard, nearest to the door, turned the key. At sight of Anne's face his sharp eyes narrowed, as was their wont at anything

unusual. Judge Beresford, perturbed and anxious, had scant time for observation.

"What is it, Anne?" he asked kindly, but a little absently. "And what have you there?"

Anne's limbs quivered under her. She had barely the strength left to totter to the table, and let her burden slip from her hands. Mr. Howard placed a chair back of her quickly, and she sank into it.

"Anne!" cried Judge Beresford, then, in alarm. "You are ill, my dear. What is it?"

"I shall be better in a moment," she said. "It is a shame to be so weak when I have prided myself on being so strong. But it will soon pass." She moistened her white lips. "Judge Beresford, I have an ugly story to tell you—one that is going to hurt you very much. But even if it hurts, it can't hurt you more to hear it than it will me to tell it."

"Why, my dear child!" Luke Beresford was at her side in a moment, holding her cold hand in his. "Anything you have to tell me can not injure me. What it is, Anne? Come, child, out with it."

"It is about—David."

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"David? Yes." He bent his head. "Very well, dear—I will listen. But don't look like that. Why, I can hardly believe it is our proud, capable Anne! Did you lock the door again, Howard? There's nothing to fear now, Anne, so come. We are waiting. Yes—Howard can hear it too, whatever it is—unless you want him to go away——"

"He knows so much, I do not think it will matter if he learns this, too," said Anne. She drew a deep breath. "Judge Beresford, have you ever heard of a woman named Louise Duchard?"

"Louise Duchard? Duchard? Never—to my remembrance. But one can not always remember names, Anne. Who is she?"

"The protector and foster-mother of Norma Charteris, David's wife."

Judge Beresford looked at her a moment, searchingly.

"You have, indeed, a story to tell, Anne. Well, my dear, begin."

So Anne began. It seemed hardly possible, as she proceeded, that so many things had happened in so short a while. From Louise Duchard's first entrance upon the scene, to her visit to Norma Beresford at

Avona, her description of David Beresford's little child, her walk home through the Beresford woods with the precious shares, the attack, her recovery and her despair, of the mistake which had been made and Louise's lonely journey to her with the treasure which David Beresford coveted, of David's talk to Anne herself later on, in an endeavor to conceal the truth from all.

Anne leaned back quietly in her chair at this point, and Mr. Howard poured a glass of water from the silver pitcher close beside them. She drank it gratefully enough, looking straight before her, as one who has been undergoing a trying ordeal, and who has not yet reached the end. She did not dare to glance at Luke Beresford.

"Whatever the papers may be I can hardly think them as valuable as David Beresford's eagerness to get them would warrant," remarked Mr. Howard now. "Have you any idea what they consist of?"

Anne looked at him oddly.

"They are the shares of which you spoke last evening," she said.

"I spoke? Last evening? Not——"

"Buena Vista Copper, yes. It was Norma Charteris' father who bought them.

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And David Beresford said they are worth two million and a half! So he must know as much about them as you do."

Lawyer Howard sprang to his feet eagerly, his hands outstretched toward the package on the table. But Luke Beresford spoke now, and the low, uneven voice sent a thrill of pain through Anne's heart.

"Wait, Howard. Anne hasn't finished yet. There is more to come."

"Yes," said Anne.

"Worse, perhaps, Anne?"

"Much, much worse," said Anne. "This morning a letter came by special messenger—and almost with its arrival I found this note lying on the floor of my room. It had been shoved under the door last evening, I presume. When I read it I flew to Rosalie. But Rosalie is not in the house. Here is Rosalie's explanation, pinned to her pillow. Read the three."

She held them out, and Luke Beresford read them as she gave them. His face, too, went ashen pale.

"Rosalie! Oh, Anne, it can't be true!"

Anne's lips trembled. She nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"The villain, the miserable, contemptible

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sneak and villain!" said Judge Beresford, under his breath. "And this is the thing I have loved and cherished as part of myself." He clenched his fist savagely. "Oh, but he shall be taught, he shall be taught!" he muttered. "Thank God I have discovered him at last!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CROSS REAPPEARS

**B**EFORE the depth of passion revealed in Judge Beresford's husky voice Anne and Mr. Howard sat silent. There was nothing they could say, so both waited for the Judge to speak first. He sat quiet a few minutes, then rose and began to pace slowly up and down the room. Anne's head drooped forward on her hand. She had, indeed, resisted temptation, but no one would ever know at what a cost. The thought of Rosalie in David Beresford's power wrung her soul to its depths. And she felt that the man was capable, in his wickedness, of carrying out any threat; she knew that in his rage at being thwarted he would consider the spoiling of Rosalie's life a piece of revenge upon the girl who had thwarted him.

"The man is downstairs—the man who is to carry the message back?"

"Yes," said Anne. "But he is ignorant of any of this, I am sure—the letter was not given to him by David. He did not know

its contents. He thinks it is about some work."

"And he goes back on the 11.30, you say?"

"Yes."

Judge Beresford looked at Howard.

"Can you reach a good man and explain things by wire to him. I want the man followed from the depot—I shall try to frustrate this scheme, if I can."

"We would have to give a description of him," said Mr. Howard.

"True. Can you describe him sufficiently, Anne?"

"No," said Anne. "I could not. I'm—I'm afraid I hardly saw him."

"We'll have him up here," said the Judge. His hand was on the bell-rope when Anne gripped his arm.

"The minute that man comes in here, David Beresford will know I have told you."

"How?"

"Through Harkins."

"Harkins—yes—if he does not know it already—if he has not seen you come in. He will know enough to tell that to David."

"He did not see me come in," said Anne. "I made sure of that."

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"We'll have Jordan up—he's pretty observant," said Judge Beresford, after a pause.

So Jordan was sent for, and in his slow, precise language was able to give a very good description of the man who sat below. Howard made a note of everything he said. Just as he was going out of the room Judge Beresford spoke.

"Try to give Harkins something to do in the front there about fifteen minutes from now," he said.

"I've had him in the garden tying up the rose-bushes all morning," said Jordan.

"Good! Call him in, however, in about ten minutes, and let him take your place at the door until that man leaves.

"Very well, sir."

Anne looked at Judge Beresford inquiringly when Jordan left the room. A cynical smile played about the corners of his keen mouth.

"If we suspect Harkins we might as well give him the chance to make a full report," he said. "Anne, I want you to go down to that man with a package, giving him orders to deliver it to the person who sent him here. If David has means of communicating with

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this house, he will be so informed, and this may allay his suspicions until Howard's man is able to catch him."

"But," began Mr. Howard dubiously, "my man has to have a charge against him to hold him. There is no charge on which he can be held. Miss Walcott will not move against him, and this business of the shares is too complicated to get out a warrant——"

"We'll get up some charge to hold him until we find out where Rosalie is," said Judge Beresford, and his voice was like ice. "Prison is too good for him—I wish I had something to go on without bringing a woman's name into it."

They knew, then, that the wound had gone deep. Mr. Howard changed the subject abruptly.

"Let us look at the papers Miss Holloway has there——"

"In a moment." The Judge pulled out a desk drawer and took out some folded pieces of parchment, unfilled forms and deeds, of which the Judge always carried a supply. "We have to do these up first, and send Anne down with them."

In a few moments they had made a respectably large and legal-looking bundle.

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Anne took it, left the study cautiously, tiptoed her way to her own room and then went down the stairs. Harkins, on duty at the hall door, glanced at her, then turned his head away. He had a guilty conscience; the robbery in the woods the previous evening weighed heavily on his mind. Anne went into the little room, where the man awaited her, smoking.

"You will please deliver this to the person who sent you here with the message this morning," she said.

"Yes, miss."

The man went away, Anne went back, presumably, to her own room, Jordan took up his usual position at the door, and Harkins was sent out to finish his work in the rose-garden; a work he hated, for Michael, the gardener who had taken old John Ward's place, disliked him cordially and was correspondingly amiable toward him.

Anne did not go back to Judge Beresford's study. She wished, as she mounted the stairs slowly in a tired fashion, that she was one of those who could weep the worst of trouble away. Her mind was so tortured by thoughts of Rosalie, so full of fears for her, that no other thought had place in it.

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There was not even room for Norma or for Maurice. She sat down forlornly at the window, looking out across the beautiful wooded land that stretched below her. Her gaze took in the gray path that wound in and out on its way to the station. She could see the messenger walking briskly along this path, and watched him until he was lost to sight among the heavy foliage. They might deceive David Beresford by this ruse, they might save Rosalie, but——

Again her head drooped upon her upturned palm. She was tired of thinking, of worrying, tired of the excitement, tired even of her very tiredness. A maid rapped at the door.

“Are you in here, Miss Anne? The Judge would like to see you in the study.”

Anne rose. Yes, she supposed she had to go—there would be much which only she could explain, and she might as well have it over and done with and be rid of it all. When she entered the room she felt, rather than saw, the indefinable excitement of the two men. Howard had evidently been using the telephone. He noticed Anne’s quick glance toward it.

“I have had Jennison on the wire—and

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gave him the description. He will take care of the fellow—follow him from the depot, and be prepared for all contingencies,” said Howard. “I had to explain somewhat lengthily—but then I know Jennison.” He hesitated a moment, with a glance at Judge Beresford. “Miss Holloway, when did you say you received this package?”

“Last evening, during dinner.”

“Yes. Did you glance over the contents?”

“No.”

“What did this woman say when she gave it to you?”

“That they were the Buena Vista shares—and something about a marriage certificate and wedding-ring. Are they there?”

“Yes—the missing shares, all of them, just as I expected. If young Mrs. Beresford can prove—and I have no doubt she will be able to prove it—that she is the daughter of Hugh Charteris, the circus man (whose name in real life, by the way, was plain John Smith) she will be a very wealthy woman.”

“Is David entitled to any of those shares in law?” asked Anne, impulsively.

“Wait,” said Mr. Howard, smiling a little. “Judge Beresford will decide that ab-

solutely, but he has already decided that David will never receive a penny from this source, unless his wife is foolish enough to give it to him. As I tell you we found the shares, the certificate, the ring. We found something else, also. Here it is."

He laid a case on the table, and opened it. On a bed of velvet, once snowy white, but now yellowed with age, lay the famous Beresford Prophecy Cross. Anne stared at it, half stupidly.

"Why, that's the cross," she said.

"Yes. But how did you get it?"

"I? I never had the cross in my possession."

"But it was in this package—with these papers."

Anne sank helplessly into a chair.

"And this morning Judge Beresford and I discovered that the cross had disappeared from the safe. We were about to investigate the affair, when it turns up in this unexpected manner."

Anne shook her head.

"I have no idea—it may be a trick—some one may have—— But no one could get into my room. You found the cross in that package?"

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"Yes."

"The inference is, then, that the cross belongs to Norma Beresford."

"But that can not be possible—this is the Beresford Cross—and the Beresford Cross is missing."

Anne sat up quickly, her eyes gleaming.

"How do you know?"

"When we opened the case——"

"Where is the case?"

"In my bag—yes, by Jove! I never thought of that, Judge. Where did the second case come from?" He reached down into the bag, and took up the old-fashioned black object. "Yes, they *are* identical. The two cases are exactly alike."

"There is a probability that we have found, not our cross, but the other one about which Dame Joan prophesied," said Judge Beresford. "The only way to discover the truth of that is to interview the woman. She may know where it came from, and who owned it. Could your suggestion be true, Howard? Could David have given the original to his wife in the beginning and then, unable to get it back from her, have had the duplicate made?"

"A duplicate? Without the original to

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work from? Hardly," answered Mr. Howard. "The Beresford Cross is not a trinket to be imitated from description. It would have to be followed in every detail by a very clever workman to avoid discovery."

"When will you go to see these people?" asked Judge Beresford. Anne raised her steady, dark-gray eyes.

"You will not call them 'these people' when you know them," she said. "The young mother is like a half-blown lily—a child, with terror and fear on her face. Her hair is as white as snow, though she can be barely twenty. She shivers at every sound—she watches window and door like a prisoner craving for escape. Brooding over her, worn out with anxiety and pain, is the watchful good soul, without whom she would long ago have died. And the baby is beautiful—a white and rosy, curly-haired, blue-eyed creature, in whose tiny features one can trace, without any effort, the likeness to her father."

"Anne, Anne!" said Judge Beresford thickly. "Don't, Anne!"

Anne rose from her chair, her own lips quivering piteously.

"No—I won't," she said. "These are his

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wife and his child. And what of my little Rosalie? My poor little girl, Rosalie, the butterfly, who will steal back to us with her pride hurled to the dust, her life ruined, spoiled——”

She looked at him a moment—then turned abruptly and left the room. Judge Beresford swung around upon the lawyer almost fiercely.

“And her look meant, ‘through you. *You, you*, Luke Beresford, are responsible for this desolation. It is through your blind, unreasoning belief in an utter scoundrel that my dear sister’s only child has been lured to her everlasting disgrace.’ She meant that, Howard.”

“No,” said Lawyer Howard. “I do not think she meant that. And, after all, the crime will be his. If he has persuaded the girl that he is a divorced man, he will be guilty of bigamy——”

“Yes, bigamy—and as such punishable by law,” retorted Judge Beresford. “But only if we drag Rosalie’s name into the affair. No matter what happens we can not do that. The child must be spared everything.”

“How about David’s family?”

“I must see them, of course. I will do all

I can—but not here. They can not come here. They would remind me, at every turn, of something which I earnestly desire to forget. The longest day David Beresford lives he shall never set his foot across my threshold.”

“He will demand his shares——”

“He shall have half the amount my father left us—half of it, with interest. Oh, I shall be just to him! But out of that sum, he will restore the ruby cross, if it is as you think, and he has disposed of it. I do not care if it takes every cent,” said Judge Beresford savagely. “I do not care——” He paused an instant. “I am angry now, you think, Howard, and am speaking in anger. That is true. But it is a different sort of anger to that which I have ever experienced. I mean it. We have had business dealings together, you and I, for the last twenty-five years. You know me as well as I know myself—and you will realize that I mean what I say when I tell you I am through with David. Through, through! And on that basis you will begin to go over my affairs. I want them settled to the last jot and tittle. I want you to be just to this most unworthy member of our house—but only just. He is

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entitled to half. Not half my entire fortune, as I meant to give, but half of the original sum, with interest. You will remember that, Howard?"

"Yes," said Howard. "Trust me to remember that. Of course you know how long the money will last him?"

"I can guess," said Judge Beresford grimly. "And then will come the pitiful appeal, when David Beresford, man about town, member of twenty different clubs, who must be gorgeously and expensively attired, will find himself at the end of his allowance. He will run into debt, Howard. His creditors will press. He will come to me, to Mary, to his wife, even to Anne. But none of these will help him. And in the end——"

"Yes, in the end. Have you foreseen the end?"

"A bullet through his forehead, perhaps. Or—work, Howard."

"Work? I hardly think so."

"We shall see."

"If he killed himself you would never forgive yourself."

Judge Beresford laughed.

"If he had killed himself five years ago

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many people would be spared much misery. But we will not talk of this now. What are you going to do? You have missed the 11.30. Luncheon will be soon on the table. You will have to stay with us until the afternoon. What will you do then? Where do you expect to see Jennison?"

"He is to report to me, personally, at my house, as soon as possible," said Mr. Howard. "I do not mind the delay—this Bu-Vi business is still on my mind. I would like to see that young woman this afternoon. Could you drive me over there? Miss Holloway could come with us, and you——"

"Yes, I'll go," said Judge Beresford, after a pause. "I have to go—I might as well go with you and Anne and be done with it."

"She might not be as willing to trust me as you——"

"Or either of us as she would trust Anne," said Judge Beresford.

"One could hardly blame her for that."

"Besides, you must be anxious to discover the truth about the cross."

"I wonder," said Judge Beresford. "I think the cross has taken second place—if I think of it at all." He rose. "I thought I heard a car being driven up just then—these

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are visitors, probably. I am expecting——”

There came the soft patter of feet up the stairs, the swishing of a silken gown, the tapping of a finger on the panel.

“Uncle Luke! Are you alone? May I come in?” And Rosalie Walcott stood on the threshold.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MOTHER DE CHANTAL

**M**OTHER DE CHANTAL, who had loved and worried over Rosalie Walcott for nearly eight years—Rosalie had been with the Sisters from her eighth to her fifteenth year, and had come as a day pupil for two years after that—felt that a serious task confronted her in dealing with this wilful child. The arrival of her erstwhile pupil the night before had created less excitement than it might, for one of the Sisters had been taken suddenly ill, and the doctor was momentarily expected. Sister Frances, the portress, was very discreet, and beyond the expressed pleasure of the good nuns the next day at seeing a favorite pupil once more, no comment was made.

After Mass and breakfast, however, Mother de Chantal sent for Rosalie, and it was not without inward trepidation that the thoughtless girl went to the interview. But

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there wasn't even the suspicion of anger on Mother de Chantal's kind face. She drew Rosalie to her lovingly, and made her sit down on the little hassock beside her, where every recalcitrant was made to sit and made to feel that love lurked very close to reprimand.

"Now, my little girl," she said. "I want you to tell me the whole story. How has it happened? Who was that young man—the young man who came in with you? What did he mean by telling you to wait until you heard from him? Begin now, dear, from the very beginning."

Rosalie clasped the firm hand in hers and held it closely.

"I think it all began because I was tired of Beresford Court," she said. "I met the Birdsalls last winter, when I went to visit Florrie Richardson. Then Amy Birdsall invited me to stay, and it was during this visit that Harvey and I——"

She hesitated.

"We liked each other right from the start—but the Birdsalls aren't Catholics, and I knew what Anne would say——"

"Anne? Oh, yes."

"I never told Anne anything at all about

it. But when I came home Harvey and I corresponded. It was only for fun at first—I never thought we'd ever——”

“Yes, dear. Go on.”

“During the summer Amy wanted me to go again, but Anne advised me not to. She said they were not of our faith, and of course I would meet young men not of the Faith, and there was danger. Anne is like that, Mother.”

“Yes,” said Mother de Chantal, very softly.

“In September they went to Aiken—the Birdsalls did, and Mrs. Birdsall wrote to Uncle Luke. He wouldn't have said no, but there was Anne—and Aunt Mary sides with Anne, always. Meanwhile, Harvey and I had made up our minds we wouldn't stand this persecution any longer——” Mother de Chantal turned her head away to hide the quiet smile that sprang to her lips. “It was then we resolved to elope.”

“I see,” said Mother de Chantal.

“Last night Harvey came after me. I thought it was great fun, but just as I was stealing out, David caught me—David is Uncle Luke's brother. He is the one that came in with me last night. Then David

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said he would see it through, and we brought him along. But once I began to think of the miles and miles we were going, every one of them farther and farther away from Beresford Court—why, it seemed as if my heart would burst. And then when Harvey began about the Methodist minister and my bravery in not letting a prejudice stand in the way of our love . . . I thought of what Anne would say and how she would look if she heard any one call our religion a prejudice. That settled it, Mother. I knew right away I couldn't go on with it. I wanted to go back to the Court, but David wouldn't let me—he said it would create a scandal. So I made them bring me here."

Mother de Chantal pressed the golden head close against her knee.

"Your guardian angel was very close to you, dear child."

"Then you are not angry?"

"Oh, no, Rosalie! I am glad and happy. I know my little girl has learned a lesson. This can never happen again."

"Never, never! I don't care if Harvey—— But he won't, Mother. Oh, he was frightfully angry at me—he wouldn't speak, not a word. I never thought he

could look like that. It scared me to death."

"Supposing, my dear child, he had looked at you like that the first Sunday morning you wanted to go to Mass, after you were married?"

"Why, Mother, surely no one would interfere with my religion?"

"My child, he considers your religion a prejudice."

Rosalie shivered in spite of herself.

"Supposing, my dear child, he raged at you for wanting to go to the sacraments? Supposing, dear, that a little baby came—and he would look like that when you wanted it to be baptized? Supposing you, through fear of him, were the means of depriving that little soul of heaven, in case of death?"

"But, Mother, that couldn't be! Nothing like that could happen."

"It has happened. Why, Rosalie, do you think that strong, proud Anne of yours would trust herself in marriage with a non-Catholic? And if she would be afraid for herself, what chance would you have?"

"None at all, if Anne had none," confessed Rosalie humbly.

"Anne's religion is not a prejudice."

"Oh, no, Mother."

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"You must give up this young man, Rosalie."

"He has given me up, Mother. I am sure he will never look at me again. I don't blame him. I'm not even sorry. I may be sorry—afterward—but I'm not one bit sorry now, dear Mother."

"My little Rosalie, you must pray. You have not been saying your prayers, faithfully, dear—now have you?"

"Well, Mother, I said them, but——"

"I know—habit, no feeling, no realization. My Rose—yes, come in."

Mother de Chantal raised her head as a nun entered, bearing a card on a silver tray. Mother glanced at it.

"Yes. In here, Sister."

"In here, Mother?" There was a note of surprise in the placid tones.

"Yes," said Mother. She threaded her fingers through Rosalie's curls, and waited. Then she heard Sister Frances' voice, and the next moment raised her keen eyes to the door. A young man hesitated on the threshold, then came in. Rosalie looked up as the door closed upon him.

"Harvey!" she exclaimed in amazement.

She would have sprang to her feet, but Mother de Chantal's hand restrained her.

"Sit down, Mr. Birdsall," said Mother de Chantal pleasantly. "Rosalie is telling me all about it—I am glad you came and I am glad to see you."

"Thank you," said the young man. His eyes were fastened on Rosalie's face, which had turned very pale. "I must apologize for my part in the intrusion this morning," he went on, politely.

"Oh, no," said Mother quietly. "I was very glad indeed to have Rosalie, and to know that the good God saved her from an error which she and you would regret all your lives."

The young man stiffened perceptibly.

"That is a matter of opinion," he said. "I came for Rosalie to-day, hoping that she had recovered from her nervousness and was willing to listen to reason."

"Won't you please sit down?" asked Mother de Chantal gently. "I don't want to say anything to hurt you, but you must listen to me. Rosalie has been my dear pupil for ten years. We all love her very much. She has no mother, no father, and

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for that reason all who care for her must be very prudent. You will surely acknowledge that, Mr. Birdsall?"

He bent his head—she was putting him in the wrong at the start—of course!

"And this religious difference——"

"Oh, it's such nonsense, such nonsense!" he burst out. "What difference can religion make?"

"To one of your own belief, nothing. To a Catholic, much. Mr. Birdsall, the Church considers herself the authority on morals for her children. She doesn't ask those outside her communion to conform to her rules, but she does ask those who are within the fold to do so. We who belong to her, belong to her willingly. Therefore we must be guided by her. Isn't that fair?"

He bowed his head in assent.

"The Church says a Catholic can not be married before a Protestant minister. She says there is no marriage."

"But the law——"

"I am speaking of the law of the Church—binding on all her children."

"Yes."

"If Rosalie married you before any Protestant clergyman or civil magistrate in the

eyes of her Church she would not be married at all. The Church would not recognize her marriage."

"Would it matter?" There was antagonism in his tone.

"I wonder!" said Mother gently. "Do you think it would matter, Mr. Birdsall? After all, one is what one is brought up to be. Rosalie is a child of the Church. Religion, spiritual comfort, is the only thing to help one bear the trials of life. Could you help her—could you say religion didn't matter when her heart was breaking, and when she felt, perhaps, that all the sorrow in the world couldn't right the terrible wrong which she had done to herself at the very beginning? See," said Mother de Chantal, "how this would work against your happiness. For one must do right according to what one *thinks* is right—and if Rosalie started her married life wrong there would always be a blot on her future."

"But, Mother," said the young man impetuously, "I don't want her to do wrong—I want her to do whatever she likes—whatever she thinks she ought to do."

"Yes," said Mother gently, "it is good to hear you talk so. That gives me a little

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hope, and if you two children care for each other——”

“I do love her. Last night I swore she would never see or hear from me again—no, not the longest day she or I had to live. But it didn’t last. I’m here to ask her to reconsider. She can’t throw me aside like this, when she knows I can’t live without her——”

“Rosalie, my dear, you care for him?”

“Yes,” said the girl, with downbent head, “I love him. But last night—I couldn’t marry that way. I thought I could, Harvey,” she said, lifting appealing blue eyes to his face, “but it was impossible. I hadn’t counted on the Catholic part of me, and it simply rose up, and if all the tongues in the world clacked against me I couldn’t get married—that way. I tried hard, but the feeling got worse every minute.”

She looked at him with the gentle pleading of a child, and his heart, which had been hardened, melted.

“But there must be a way, if you love me, Rosalie,” he urged. “Tell me the way. I am not altogether outside the pale, am I, Mother?” he asked, smiling in her direction.

“No, my son. The right way is this. You must take a course in Catholic doctrine,

so that you will see just what it is Rosalie believes. Then you must agree that you will not interfere with your wife's practice of her religion, and that any children of the marriage shall be brought up in your wife's faith. The Church does not like what we call mixed marriages, but she permits them. Her children force her to," she added, with a little sigh.

"But, Mother, that is easy! And Rosalie could be married as she pleased, then—rightly, in the eyes of her Church?"

"At least, not wrongly," said Mother de Chantal.

"Would you do that, Harvey?" asked Rosalie.

"And why not, Rosalie? I can't promise to see things the way you do. I mean I won't promise to get religion for you, or anything of that sort——"

"No," said Rosalie.

"But I'm only too willing to know what you believe, and as for the other things—that will always be your business—I shouldn't dare to interfere."

Mother de Chantal was watching him. He had an open, honest, as well as handsome face, she thought—and Mother de

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Chantal was a good judge of human nature.

"Rosalie must go back at once to her people," she said now, "and you must court her frankly and without any of this underhand correspondence."

"Yes," said the young man. "All secrecy is at an end as far as I am concerned. I want Rosalie, and I am willing that the whole world should know it."

"You are a good boy," said Mother de Chantal smiling at him, "and my Rosalie is a good girl, too." She looked at her watch. "Have you sent word to your people, dear child?"

"David is to come and tell me what they say——"

"David—the young man who was here—whom I saw——"

"Yes, Mother."

Mother waited a moment, considering.

"He has probably told them by this, you think?"

"Yes."

"Mother, my car is at the door. Will you trust me to take Rosalie safely to Beresford Court?" asked Harvey Birdsall eagerly. "We will go back together, and I will see the Judge, and explain everything—yes, and

take my medicine. It may be more bitter than yours, Mother, but I'll swallow it," he added, with a wry face.

"That will be a small price to pay," said Mother. She held out her hand. "Yes, I think you are a gentleman, Mr. Birdsall—I am sure of it. You mean now what you say—you will take my little girl back to Beresford Court, and all will come right, I am sure. Rosalie, get your things, child." And then, when Rosalie left the room, the Mother looked into the boyish eyes upraised to meet her own.

"She has a very tender, very thoughtless, very loving little heart. You will treasure it, Mr. Birdsall? For I can see it is in your keeping. She will repay you well, if you help her now to follow its dictation."

"I will never persuade her against it again, Mother," he said, in a low tone. "Believe me. For though not of you I am with you." And then he added, as if by an afterthought. "Pray that I may see the right thing to do and have the courage for it myself, Mother. I was going into it very lightly—I see my error now."

"My good boy," said Mother de Chantal. "God can't refuse to grant light to a heart

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like yours. I will pray for you, indeed. And may God bless you both."

She watched them from the parlor window—the slim, childish girl, in her silken coat and babyish hood—smiled at them when they waved to her, and then turned away with a little sigh on her lips. For Rosalie would find the world a rough and thorny path, she thought. And yet, after last night—there was hope that her religion was on a safer basis than even Mother de Chantal had thought possible. Yes, Rosalie might be one of those who needed this sort of marriage to steady her in practice and in purpose. Who could foresee the design of God?

## CHAPTER XIX

### ROSALIE EXPLAINS

**S**HE came in without permission, throwing back her silk hood, and wriggling out of her long, shapeless, touring-coat with the agility of an eel. Her face was flushed with excitement, her eyes were very bright. If there was a slight hint of the nervousness possessing her in the rapidity of her movements Judge Beresford was too astounded to notice it. She stood looking at him with that half-mutinous, half-pleading smile on her childish mouth which he knew so well. Then she held out her two hands to him.

"Uncle Luke! Please forgive me! I'm awfully sorry!" She raised her big lashes and there were tears, quick, sudden tears in the bright eyes. "I was sorry right from the start—and I grew sorrier and sorrier, until at last I knew I couldn't go on with it——"

"With what, Rosalie?" The stern tone frightened her. Her under-lip drooped.

"Oh! You are really angry——" She turned toward the door.

"Rosalie, we have been half-mad with anxiety. Please explain now, and ask for forgiveness afterward.' You needn't mind Mr. Howard—he knows all about it."

"Why—why—I eloped last night," she said. "Or—I mean—I only half eloped."

"You eloped last night—you only half-eloped. Go on, Rosalie!"

"We were to be married by some minister or other, and then take a train for Aiken. But when I thought of it all—of you and Anne and Aunt Mollie and how sorry you would be, I—I just couldn't. Besides, Father Walsh had given me such a lecture! I didn't really begin to appreciate it properly until I was face to face with the inevitable." She glanced at him timidly. "Then I wanted to turn back again to the Court, but David called me a little fool (I know I am!) and told me there would be an awful scandal. So we drove right straight to Mother de Chantal, who took me in—it was half-past two—wasn't it awful to get a dear nun like that out of her bed at such an ungodly hour——"

"And then this morning she sent you back?"

"Well——" began Rosalie.

"I suppose you believed that man when he told you he had obtained a divorce? Don't you think you would have heard it here if such had been an actual fact? You knew of his marriage—we have never concealed the fact, although we haven't been proclaiming it from the housetops——"

"Divorce! Marriage!" Rosalie's face was the embodiment of horror. "Uncle Luke! What do you mean?"

"Since when does the Catholic Church permit a marriage between a girl and a divorced man?"

"But, Uncle Luke, I don't know what you mean. What *are* you talking about? He's never been married in his life—although," her cheek dimpled in spite of her dismay, "he was very, very near it this morning."

"I tell you, Rosalie, that he is married and has a baby a year old."

"Oh! I don't believe it!" said Rosalie, her face growing rather white, nevertheless. "Why, he would never *dare* come back here with me. Yes, and wait to see you besides

—he's downstairs waiting now—if such a thing were possible.”

“Come back here with you? Wait downstairs to see me! Who is downstairs waiting to see me?”

“Harvey Birdsall, of course!”

“Birdsall! Harvey Birdsall! Minot Birdsall's eldest son?”

“Why, who else? He's not a Catholic—and I knew that was just why you were keeping me home from Aiken, and we've been corresponding for nearly a year—there! And last night we eloped.”

“You eloped? With——”

“Harvey Birdsall! And I won't believe he was ever married or divorced or—or anything else. It's bad enough as it is—but to say such dreadful things as that——” she began to sob now. “No, I won't believe it, I just simply won't!”

Mr. Howard and Judge Beresford looked at each other, and then, in spite of the heavy weight resting on Luke Beresford's heart, he went off into a peal of laughter—laughter so hearty and so genuine that Rosalie's tears dried as if by magic, and she turned to look at him in wonder.

“By Jove, Howard, I'm expecting to fall

out of bed at any moment!" he said. "Did you ever hear such a comedy of errors in all your life? And the further we go into it, the worse it is getting. I don't *think* I'm dreaming, but if I chance to wake up——"

He looked at Rosalie with considering eyes.

"Sit down, girlie," he said. "You tell me you were on the verge of an elopement—well, that you did elope. And with a certain young man named Birdsall. All right. How did David find it out?"

"Why, David came with us."

"With you? You are sure you didn't elope with David?"

"Of course not! Elope with David!" She stared at him, then began to giggle. "I told him so! I told him you'd think so! But he's horrid—he promised me he'd come back and make everything all right."

"Rosalie, my dear child, everything will be all right, if you'll only tell us how it happened."

"Well, Harvey and I had it all planned." She blushed rose-red. "He came last night in his car, and at twelve o'clock I stole out to meet him. David caught me. When we told him what we were going to do, he said

he'd come with us. We went on ahead, while he started back for his overcoat. When he overtook us he told us that you had found out that I was gone, and that you were coming. But you didn't catch up to us. And the farther I got away from home and Anne and Aunt Mollie the worse I felt, and when David began to laugh at what you would think or say—well, I couldn't go on. I think if I had stood up before that minister to get married I would have dropped down dead with fright and shame, too. So I made them take me out to the academy. Mother de Chantal had been up with Sister Philomena, and when I came they thought it was the doctor. Mother de Chantal was heavenly. She wouldn't listen to a word, only made me go to bed right away, and sent me a lovely warm drink. This morning, after Mass, she took me into her own little room, and there I told her the whole story. While we were talking Harvey came—and she brought him in, too."

Rosalie paused an instant—her dimpled face grave, her mouth drooping a trifle.

"She didn't scold us—I wish she had—but the way she talked, I think she nearly made Harvey cry. I know *I* couldn't stop."

The tears came again at the remembrance. "And when it was over she said she was going to trust Harvey because she knew he was a gentleman—and send him back with me to Beresford Court to explain everything. She wouldn't let me wait for David. So Harvey is downstairs, waiting to talk to you, and please be kind to him, for he feels very, very badly indeed."

"You go upstairs to Anne, then, and let her see that you are safe—you have nearly broken her heart," said Luke Beresford. "I'll interview the disappointed bridegroom—and invite him to luncheon. Did you ever hear of such a playing at cross purposes?" he went on, turning to Howard as Rosalie left the room. "And what a clever schemer my brave brother thought himself! He took the one bare chance in a thousand—and lost."

"He would not have lost, I think, if he had any one less decisive than Miss Holloway to deal with."

"God bless us," said Luke Beresford, "but where is this day to end? We've only started it, Howard. First the missing cross, then the Buena Vista shares, and again the cross. Rosalie's elopement and Rosa-

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lie's return! I'm afraid I'm hardly able for any more, Howard."

"Unfortunately, there is more," said Mr. Howard, "and a very important part of the day to me."

"I think I had better interview the gentleman downstairs," said Luke Beresford rising. "Poor fellow! Now that the weight is off my mind where Rosalie is concerned, I really feel sorry for him."

"Yes," said Mr. Howard absently. He was fingering the Buena Vista shares, and had no thought for Harvey Birdsall. "If he could have realized on these there would have been a pretty penny in it."

The shadow came back again to Judge Beresford's brow. For the moment he had ceased to think of David. It was the thought of David that set his mouth in grim lines, and made the young man who was standing at the library window turn with some trepidation. Judge Beresford looked somewhat formidable to him just then. But the first words he spoke dispelled all his fears.

"I am to tell you that I am very glad that you did not succeed in eloping last evening, and I want you to stay to luncheon," he

said in his cordial manner as he extended his hand. "Don't try it again, lad. There's nothing against the Birdsalls in this family, and an elopement is always a nasty thing. You and Rosalie must start fair and square when you do start; promise me that you will."

"That's why I'm here, Judge Beresford," said the young man. "I was prepared for a good setdown, and even a term of banishment—but it wouldn't make me any less determined than I am to have Rosalie, to do what is right according to the views of Rosalie's Church, and try my best to be true to every responsibility I undertake."

"There! That sounds like Minot Birdsall's own son!" said Judge Beresford. "That's the way to talk, and I'm glad to hear it. We had a very bad morning of it, until we heard the truth of things—but now I'm satisfied. Luckily, we were able to keep the truth from Mrs. Beresford, but Miss Holloway knows it. She may not be very gentle with you, but you must expect that, for Anne is a bit of a martinet, and without seeming to she keeps us all in order." He smiled in an encouraging manner and Harvey Birdsall felt almost glad that he had not

succeeded in carrying off Rosalie, so entirely different, indeed, was this reception from the one which he had expected and which he felt he would have had no right to resent.

Anne did not come down to luncheon. Rosalie's appearance and her penitence had completely unnerved her. She had not known, until the girl danced in on her, jubilant because "Uncle Luke" had been so lenient, how deeply the affair had gone with her. She was kind enough to Rosalie, but the girl felt that there was something missing—something that sent her, a little downcast, to the room which she had left the previous evening. Here she indulged in a good cry, after which she as diligently tried to efface all signs of emotion, and succeeded fairly well.

Mrs. Beresford accepted Harvey Birdsall's presence graciously enough—even with a little indifference, for her thoughts were full of Anne.

"I knew she was not well last evening—and now she is lying up there looking just like a ghost and complaining of a splitting headache. I wish Dr. Holmes would come—it seems so strange for Anne to be sick."

"Yet one can't be well all the time, and

Anne is the sort who is well *nearly* all the time," commented her husband. "It is a cold, probably. She went off picture-hunting yesterday afternoon, and it takes time and patience to get the kind of pictures Anne wants. Beresford woods on an October afternoon is apt to be a chilly place."

"That may be," said Mrs. Beresford with a sigh of relief. "I never thought of that. She herself asserts that there is nothing wrong. Well, Dr. Holmes will be here in a little while."

They went through the rest of the meal in comparative silence, Judge Beresford wondering how he could tell his wife the truth about David, and feeling as if a prop had been taken away from him, for Anne would do it much better than he, he felt assured, and in a way that would not injure her.

When he went upstairs after luncheon he met Anne, dressed for outdoors. The sight of her haggard face drove all other thoughts out of his head.

"I thought you were in bed, Anne," he exclaimed. "Is it wise to go out if you are not feeling well?"

"I imagine the house depresses me," said Anne. "And that a good walk will help me

to get rid of it. What do you think of Rosalie?"

Judge Beresford shook his head.

"I am prepared for anything," he said. "But I am glad, too. Anne, is a walk necessary? Or would you care to drive a little way? Mr. Howard and I are going into Avona."

"To see——"

"Yes. I'm not asking you to come, Anne, in fact, I'd rather you would not. You have had enough——"

"Oh, I must go. Dr. Holmes is going, too. She is in a wretched condition, in absolute need of a physician's care. If something isn't done for her I'm afraid her brain will give way."

Judge Beresford looked thoughtful.

"In that case, Anne, Howard had better postpone his visit—he can come out to Beresford again. Do you think she would be able to talk business in a fortnight? He has waited so long that it won't hurt him to wait a little longer. Howard," he called to the little lawyer, who was just coming out on the terrace to finish a cigar. "No—don't bother coming up—Anne and I will join you." In a few seconds the three were standing on the

broad stone terrace together. "Anne thinks we will have to postpone our visit to Avona. David's wife, she says, is in no condition to talk business."

"She needs a physician—not a lawyer," said Anne. "And I am worried, too. Will David, in his rage at being frustrated, try to carry out his threat and steal the little one? If that happens, there is no hope at all for the mother."

Judge Beresford was silent, his brows drawn together.

"My brother inflicted the injury—I suppose I must do all I can to repair it," he said at last, with a long sigh. "Anne, when you are feeling better, will you tell Mollie? There is no help for it—they will be safer here than anywhere, at least, until we are sure that David is finally disposed of."

"I was waiting for you to say that," said Anne, with a slight smile. "It will not really be so awful—and of course I will tell Mrs. Beresford. I think, however, that Dr. Holmes, Mrs. Beresford, and myself should go to Avona first of all, and induce them to come back to Beresford Court. There is a much greater chance of the little mother recovering her equilibrium here, and there is

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absolutely no chance of her ever seeing David. This is the one place which he will avoid—at least for a time.”

“For good,” said Judge Beresford grimly. “If I have anything to say.”

“There is only one thing which *must* be decided,” said Mr. Howard now gravely. “The ownership of the cross. I can not move in this matter, or begin any search such as we had planned this morning, until I am sure of that.”

“I will wire you,” said Judge Beresford, “either to go ahead or hold off. You will know the meaning. I do not want to begin to talk about the cross if she is in such a poor condition——”

“Louise Duchard will know,” said Anne. “We won’t have to bother Norma.”

## CHAPTER XX

### FATHER WALSH

**M**R. HOWARD and Judge Beresford went into the house, while Anne walked down slowly past the well-kept lawns and out into the road. The air was mild and balmy, and the sun seemed to penetrate to the chill which had settled in Anne's blood that morning when she discovered Rosalie's disappearance, and which even her return had not served to dissipate. A lover of outdoors, outdoors called to her to heal her hurt. Nature's God spoke to her in every whispering breeze; here she could be alone with Him, and He would calm her turbulent spirit.

Anne was not of those who take serious things lightly, and though she thanked God that He had saved Rosalie from bitter unhappiness, she could not gloss over the fact that Rosalie had been willing to marry clandestinely and out of the Faith. Perhaps Anne was of those who could never take the joy of life as it was offered. Sur-

roundings, conditions, circumstances—all would have to be felicitous, before she could consider happiness as a real essential to her existence. She could not do an unjust thing for her nearest and dearest, and she could never allow her affections to fasten themselves on one who was not of her own religious belief. She was of that blessed type with whom God comes first. It was not a question of injury to this or that one, of good to man or woman, of joy to herself. An action had to be viewed in the clear spectrum of the Faith in which she had been reared. Perhaps it was this calm judgment, this commonsense spirituality which had first led Mrs. Beresford to think that she meant to enter the convent. Anne would have been glad of a vocation, but she had known for many years that this was not to be her life.

She confessed to herself, now, with some bitterness of soul, that she had failed somehow in the example she had given Rosalie. Mother de Chantal, with her wide, broad experience of human nature, would know better than this, but compared with Mother de Chantal's Anne's sphere was narrow. To those who do not know what tales are brought

by perplexed men and women to Religious of Mother de Chantal's type, this assertion may seem singular, but it is true, as every Catholic knows. Anne could only look upon the misery which a mixed marriage entails, and which Rosalie had thought—perhaps still thought of entering. Mother de Chantal knew that there was something beyond outward frivolity which had sent the girl flying to the shelter of the academy walls. She knew that the Faith was more deeply rooted than even Rosalie herself was aware of, and she was positive that there would never be a repetition of the action which had almost turned out so disastrously.

But Anne was not able to see with Mother de Chantal's eyes. God had not given her the clear vision which he had bestowed upon His chosen spouse. Then, again, she felt all the more bitter because she and Rosalie were the only two Catholics in all that household. Their lives must show the truth, and, when they failed, their responsibility was all the more serious. This was Anne's way of looking at it—a not unwise way, even in a household as upright as the Beresfords, who were of no religious belief beyond that in a supreme Creator.

So Anne's headache was not so much that as a heartache. The load lifted from her heart would mean a corresponding load lifted from her brain. As she took the road which had led into the Beresford woods she thought of Maurice Holmes. She would be very glad to meet him to-day. She needed another's strength, the comfort of another's presence, now, when she felt so unsure of her own. And as if in answer to the thought she heard the sound of a horse's feet—coming at a walk this time. She paused, waiting, and soon the horse itself came in sight, ambling along and nibbling at choice bits wherever it chose, its owner walking beside it, the reins drawn lightly over his arm.

"Father Walsh!" said Anne, and there was no mistaking the joy in her face and voice.

"It's you, Anne?" he asked, smiling at her. "Old Billy and myself have been enjoying a little ramble. 'Tis a lovely place you have here."

"Yes, indeed," said Anne nodding. "When did you get home from Deepdale—last night or this morning?"

"Last night, of course. Mrs. Ward went after the boy on the midnight train. They're

home since ten o'clock. I've just been there."

"Yes?" said Anne. "How is he?"

The priest nodded his head.

"We've got to allow for the bad effects of traveling, Anne, but death is in his face. A week I'd give him, at the most."

"Poor mother—poor little mother!" said Anne pitifully.

"I don't know," said Father Walsh. "She has rare consolations—the world can't see them. Still, it's her only son, and that's the thing that wrings the heart. Her son!"

He looked a little downhearted, but soon roused himself:

"I'm after that fine doctor of yours—let him step out of his way a bit and look Johnnie over. It's not any use, that's sure—but it will comfort them both."

"He'll go this afternoon," said Anne gently. "And you—are you very busy, Father—must you go back now? Or can you give me a little while?"

"As long as you like, when it's you, Anne. There's no trouble, I hope? You don't look like the same girl at all, to-day."

"I don't feel like the same girl, Father," confessed Anne, with a sad little smile.

"But I'm going to put all my burden straight on your shoulders. I would have put more than that on you had you been home last evening, and I had my early visit this morning all planned out, but I didn't even get to Mass."

"I missed you—but I thought Beau had cast a shoe or something—he always does when you are most anxious to get to church."

"A faithful heretic!" said Anne smiling, for easy-going Beau was always a joke between them. Whenever there was any special devotion under way in church some accident was sure to happen to Beau. "At least Beau hasn't been able to keep me home. And it wasn't Beau—I wish it were."

"I'm all ears," said Father Walsh.

Old Billy stopped in his ambling walk, and turned his head once or twice as if inviting his master to come on. But Father Walsh paid no further attention to him. He was listening gravely, attentively, as Anne once more repeated, but this time confident of sympathy, the events of the preceding day and that morning. Every word she spoke seemed to lift the burden, seemed to make her heart light. Father Walsh and she were very intimate—she relied thor-

oughly upon his keen judgment. He was silent when she finished. They had seated themselves on the roadside, and as Anne talked the old priest twisted a blade of grass in and out between his fingers.

"I wonder, Anne," he said, "if you can recall a conversation you and I had about three years ago—I think it was around the time that the accident happened to Johnnie—the theft, you know."

"What was it?" asked Anne curiously.

"We were talking of the Judge, and of his brother David—and I asked you then what you thought would be the greatest blow——"

"Oh, yes," said Anne, "I remember. We said that Johnnie Ward's arrest would be a hard trial to the Judge. And then we talked of his deeply-rooted affection for all of his household, and what would happen if ever David, for instance, did anything like that?"

"Yes," said Father Walsh. "And now—David's been doing worse."

"Worse?" said Anne musingly. "It's bad—but it isn't, well, it isn't like Johnnie Ward. You see, David may feel that all this was his by a sort of right, and Johnnie hadn't that excuse."

"No," said Father Walsh. "That's so. But the Judge knows all about David now?"

"Oh, yes."

"And how does he take it?"

"He's very angry, very bitter. He will surely do his best to punish him."

"Punish him, is it? 'Tis a term in State's prison is the proper punishment for him. But he won't get it, he won't get it. The little woman will get well, and the child will draw them together, and the laddybuck'll roll in his wife's wealth until he manages to spend it all. That's the way with the wicked in this world, my child."

"Yes," said Anne, with a little sigh.

"Yes, I'm afraid it's the destined way for David Beresford."

"Do you think the Judge would come down to see Johnnie Ward before the end?" asked Father Walsh.

Anne looked startled.

"I—I don't know. Such a thing never struck me. The poor fellow—if he's done wrong—oh, it would be too hard on him. He knows the Judge has forgiven him——"

"Yes," said Father Walsh absently. "But the Judge—would it be hard on the Judge, do you think?"

Anne considered a moment.

"At any other time I would say yes, unhesitatingly. At present, he is so filled with bitterness toward David, who has had so much, that he will not consider Johnnie's offense anything. Father, doesn't it seem odd? Johnnie was such a *good* boy, apparently. Not of the goody-goody sort, either, but—— I don't wonder Judge Beresford has never been able to understand it."

"No," said Father Walsh.

"Can you honestly say, Father, that you ever did?"

"Good gracious, child, one must be satisfied to take a chap's word," said Father Walsh rising. "It's a thing I don't like to talk much about——"

"No, Father—no one would." Anne rose, too, holding out her hand. "I'll send Dr. Holmes—we're going after David's wife and will bring her home with us. If the doctor thinks Johnnie is as bad as you say, I'm sure the Judge will be only too glad to see him."

"Yes," said Father Walsh, a little absently. "Come back here, Billy—no use going any farther."

"Won't you come up to the house and

have a glass of lemonade, Father? You must be thirsty."

"No, I'm not, Anne—not a bit, and I want to get home again. I'm a little busy just now. Will you be to Mass in the morning?"

"Yes, Father—with God's help."

"Don't be worrying about Rosalie—there's good in her, Anne. She'll probably come to me with the whole thing. It's hard to be stern with the butterfly things of life, Anne. There's so few of them it doesn't seem right to sweep the joy off their wings by rough handling. But one has to do it, sometimes. And Rosalie will learn more by this one experience than you and I could teach her in a year of admonition."

"I trust so," said Anne. "And indeed I hope so. She's a lovable little creature and not a bad Catholic, but she takes her religion as she takes everything else, with a laugh—"

"No," said Father Walsh. "I don't agree with you there, Anne. Perhaps your one fault is to take it a little bit too seriously. Rosalie's drawing back at the last moment shows me there's more than a laugh in it—there's depth, too. You'll find out, Anne. And now that Mother de Chantal knows the

story," he began to chuckle. "I won't have to worry about the young fellow—she'll take care of him, or I miss my guess. Do you know Mother de Chantal, Anne?"

"Yes, Father. Not very intimately—but enough to feel that she is very clever and capable."

"She's more than that, Anne, more than that. Well, I'll be going now. I'm not going near Johnnie Ward until to-morrow—so you'll bring me a report of how he is, and what Dr. Holmes says about him. Do you know now I was really forgetting—how about yourself, Anne? I'm not the one to be suspicious—but there's no harm in asking?"

He looked at her so merrily, so teasingly, that Anne laughed in spite of her blushing cheeks.

"Not a bit of harm, Father. And it's true."

"A good Catholic—sure I might have known. The people at Beresford Court will find it hard to get along without you. You've been faithful and true."

"I've only treated them as they've treated me, Father," said Anne gently. "The Beresfords have been very good to me."

"Yes, yes," said Father Walsh, nodding.  
"Good-by to you, Anne."

"Good-by, Father. I'm sorry you won't come on to the house——"

"Another time, child. It will take me an hour to get home."

Anne patted old Billy's white nose as he came up to them at the priest's whistle, and then stood watching until horse and rider had disappeared. She was glad indeed at meeting Father Walsh—she had needed some one who could help her, and he had lightened her burden considerably. His words about Rosalie, too, had done a great deal of good.

"One really loses sight of the providence of God," she said to herself. "I've been worrying about affairs as if I were the only one who could do or was able to do anything to help. Rosalie is in God's hands—and in the hands of Our Lady of Triumphs, Our Lady of Victory," she added, with a little peaceful smile. "I must not forget that."

She went back to Beresford Court with a light heart.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE WORST OF ALL

**W**HEN Dr. Holmes arrived a half-hour later he found the big touring-car in readiness at the door, and was much astonished when informed that his services, both personal and professional, were to be in demand for the rest of the day. Mary Beresford had been told the story of David's deceit and misrepresentations—a story which Luke Beresford felt would be the only one that she could bear. Therefore, Rosalie's escapade was kept away from her—at least, until she had recovered from the excitement which possessed her when she learned that David's wife and child were so close to Beresford. Mr. Howard went away on the afternoon train as he had planned to do, and Judge Beresford did not accompany Anne or his wife.

"Mary's presence will be assurance enough," he said. "And mine might embarrass or excite the little woman unneces-

sarily. Are you sure Mary can stand this?" he asked Dr. Holmes a bit anxiously.

Dr. Holmes smiled, and the smile lighted up his dark, rugged face with unexpected sweetness.

"I think you are safely past the worrying stage as far as Mrs. Beresford is concerned," he said. "She needs, just at present, more than anything else, a healthy, absorbing interest—one that will take her out of herself. From what I hear I imagine it is being provided for her. A delicate little victim of oppression, a healthy, year-old baby! Why, I think the thing is especially designed by a kind Providence to work her absolute cure."

"Yes," said Judge Beresford in a moved tone. "To you also, after God."

"After God—and Anne, you mean."

"That of course. Anne is a very important factor. But you—how shall I ever be able to repay you? You have only to name your terms—as I told you long ago."

"I'm afraid you will consider them exorbitant," said Maurice Holmes.

There was no mistaking his meaning. Judge Beresford put his hand out and the two men's fingers gripped hard.

"It's Anne—I knew it."

"It's Anne."

"God bless you both," said Judge Beresford. "And that's all I can say."

He watched the car from the terrace, as it rolled slowly down the drive, its pace suited to Mrs. Beresford's dislike of anything like speed. When the car came back it would bring with it a strange new element—a discordant element, he was afraid.

"But Beresford Court is large," he thought, as, with a sigh, he turned back to his study. He went inside and closed the door—then stood stock-still, startled, for a man was seated in the chair which Lawyer Howard had occupied all morning—a man with disheveled hair and white face. A man whom, at first sight, Luke Beresford could hardly recognize.

For a moment the two brothers stared into each other's face—and Luke Beresford's was as white as that of the man seated before him.

"Well," he said, at last, crisply, "well, what do you want?"

David Beresford lifted his hand, waved it with a motion he tried to make careless as of old. Then the hand dropped heavily and his chin sunk forward on his breast.

"I—I don't know what I want," he said.

"Really?" said Judge Beresford, and he could not keep the irony from his voice. "Really? Then it is the first time in many a year that you have honored me with your company without a very definite knowledge on the subject. What do you propose to do?"

"I came here to find out."

"Oh, you did? Would you care to have me invite you to remain? To let things rest as they were? Shall I tell you that I forgive you all—everything?" The suppressed rage in his voice was a revelation to the weak and cowering creature before him.

"I don't want to be forgiven, Luke," he said. "I don't want you to forgive me—or any one. I want to get away—but before I—before I go—I—I want to—confess!"

"Confess!" Luke Beresford laughed. "Confession is no longer your rôle, young man. You are aware that Rosalie is at home?"

"Yes."

"You are aware, perhaps, that Anne was too clever to be deceived by you, and that the Buena Vista shares are safe?"

"Yes—I met the man myself, going

through Beresford woods. I told him you had sent me. I looked through the package and then gave it back and let him go on. I knew at once what had happened."

Luke Beresford stared, his hands clenching and unclenching.

"Your wife and child are coming under the protection of my roof—Mary and Anne have gone for them now. Did you know that?"

"I thought you would do it. You were always kind, Luke."

"Always—kind! Always—kind!" Luke Beresford felt that in his heart a new hatred was being born of this white-faced, miserable man, whom he had loved as few brothers are loved, whom he had indulged as few fathers indulge their sons, whom he had——

"Where is the Beresford Cross?" he demanded sternly. The question seemed to make that cowering figure sink more completely into the depths of the leather-covered chair.

"You know that, too?"

"I know that? Did you think I would never find it out?"

"I meant to tell you."

"When?"

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"Now. When I told you all the rest."

"When you told me all the rest! But I know all—everything!"

"Not quite everything. There is more. I'm going away, Luke. I've got the money you gave me yesterday. I don't want money. I'm going away where I'll have to work. Work, they say, helps—I want to work and work hard. Work, so that when night comes remembrance and remorse will be smothered in fatigue."

"Remembrance and remorse!" Luke Beresford echoed the words, eyeing his brother keenly. There seemed something oddly strange about him, something queer, peculiar——

"Is it possible for me to get the Beresford Cross back?" he asked coldly.

"Yes. There is a wealthy Italian chap at the Amsterdam. He has paid me \$2,000 and was to pay me the rest when I came back. I haven't got back since. You needn't be afraid—he's all right. Just tell him the cross was stolen and he'll give it back. The two thousand—well—you'll be out that—that's gone with the rest, Luke."

Luke Beresford became conscious, in some way, that there was something wrong

with the man who sat there, discussing his affairs in such a frozen, almost indifferent tone. But for the first time in his life he felt neither curiosity nor concern.

"If there is anything you want from your rooms, I would advise you to go for it, and get away before your wife arrives," he said coldly. "Of money you tell me you have enough. Mr. Howard has my orders in regard to you, and he will inform you of all arrangements. I shall be just and fair with you—of that rest assured. But you need look for no favors. What I give will be yours rightfully—it is your portion, your share. You can take it whenever you please, and how you please. And now——"

He made a gesture signifying dismissal.

But David Beresford did not rise from his chair—only lifted his miserable eyes and stared at him.

"Luke," he said, "you have still to hear the worst."

"What do you mean?"

"This morning—at the edge of the Beresford woods, outside his cottage—I saw—the ghost of a man—the living ghost—of an honest, upright man. I saw John Ward, Luke."

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Luke Beresford said nothing—only stared at him with eyes that sought his soul. David Beresford stood, clinging to the table with shaking fingers.

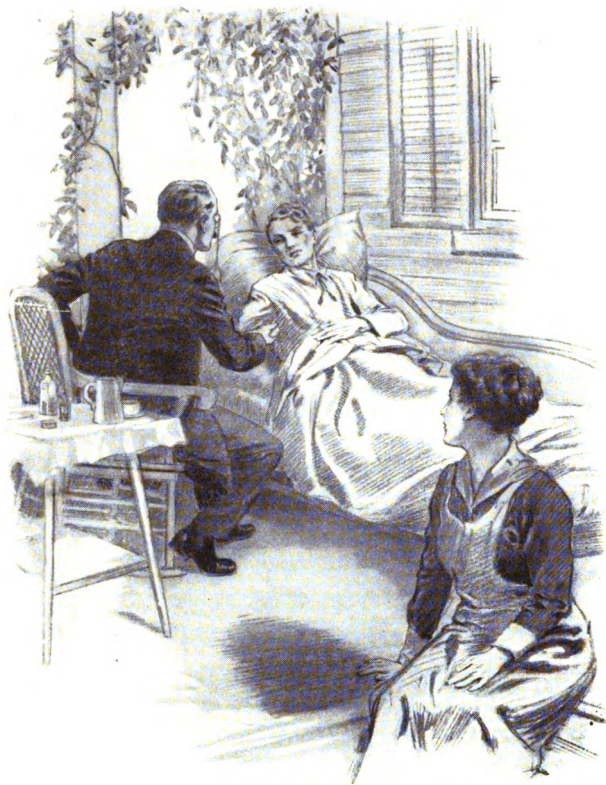
“He had to hold to the gate to support his skeleton of a frame. His eyes burned deep in his head. His face was a skin of parchment drawn over skull and cheeks. He is a dead man—but his soul would not rest until it had done its work. That is the worst, Luke.”

Still no word, no sign, save his brother's watching eyes.

“He looked at me—ah, yes—I stood there before him—he looked at me, and he smiled. And then he lifted his long, bony finger and pointed it at me. And when he had done that he touched his own breast. He was comparing the two of us, you see. I ran, then. I felt as if Satan himself could devise no worse torture than to compel me to stand and stare at that travesty of a human being.”

David Beresford moved toward the door, his limbs tottering.

“I'm going—you won't hear again—you won't be bothered—ever. It's all over now. And that is the worst. For I stole the



“‘I wanted to see you, Johnnie,’ said the Judge.”—*Page 283.*



money—I—and he knew it. And I told him that *you* knew it, and that you wanted him to go to prison to save the Beresford honor. And he wouldn't do it—not until I had sent back the necklace, because it was one of Mary's wedding-gifts. That's the worst—and the last. Johnnie Ward is innocent—he has suffered for me, because of you."

And David Beresford went out of the room, and closed the door behind him. It was the last his brother ever saw of him in life again.

But he had truly said that his story was the worst that had been told. For to Luke Beresford, the upright, honest, faithful, fearless man, the whole world changed from that hour. Desolation seemed to fill him, sweep over him. He had never known such utter, terrible despair as now looked him in the face. He had no room for anger against David—he was too filled with horror. So this was why he had always believed in Johnnie Ward's innocence!

He got up from his chair, put on his hat and coat, and went out. He must see John Ward—he must hear this horrible truth from the one who had suffered—he must know, and know at once! His steps seemed urged

## THE WORST OF ALL

on by a power over which he had no control. He had forgotten every one and everything else in his overwhelming desire to find out this were true or just a fancy on David's part—a grim desire to torment one who was about to cease being kind to him.

He reached the little cottage at last, its gate, hanging on one hinge, overtopped by giant lilac bushes. He swung it open with no uncertain hand and walked up the short, bush-bordered path. When he reached the front stoop, he paused. A couch had been drawn out upon the porch, a little table placed beside it, and a rocker. Something lay upon the couch—something that did not move as he approached. But his coming had not been unheard. The door swung open and Mrs. Ward appeared upon the threshold. The Judge had not seen her since her boy's conviction—he stared now, aghast at the changes these few years had made.

“Glory be to God, it is the Judge!” she said. “It is Judge Beresford himself!” She looked down at the recumbent figure—but the words had reached him, too. The boy was trying to raise himself on one elbow.

“Judge Beresford!” he said, in a husky whisper.

"Yes," said Judge Beresford. He moved the table aside, and drew the rocker closer to the young man. "I wanted to see you, Johnnie. How are you, my boy?"

"Pretty weak, sir."

"I can see that. But the train traveling—that was hard. You'll get better in a little while. Come here, Mrs. Ward, sit down here—I want to talk to both of you." He choked a little, looking down at the boy in the very beginning of his youth, who lay dying because of his devotion. "Johnnie," he went on in a gentle voice, "I've felt right along that you were innocent—yes, lad. But it's only one-half hour since I know who is guilty. Johnnie, Johnnie Ward, why did you do it?"

Johnnie Ward did not answer. His mother sat down on the top step of the stairs, and looked at Judge Beresford, with her old, searching, haggard eyes.

"I saw David. He told me he was near here to-day. I don't know what he feels—I can only know what I feel. Johnnie Ward, as there is a just God in heaven, I never knew that David was the thief. Never, never! To you I must justify myself—to death. To you, who have suffered a living

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death, you who have given your life for a Beresford as truly as though you died saving one of us from death every day for the last three years."

The boy on the sofa looked at him with the burning eyes which David Beresford had described, and lifted a clawlike, burning hand.

"My father said——"

"Yes, I know. But it was to be in honor, John Ward. You had not the right to sully your father's name."

A slight smile parted the blackened lips.

"God knew the truth—and my mother. My father, too. I am satisfied."

"Satisfied!" cried Judge Beresford, with a sob in his throat. Tears sprang to his eyes and rolled down his cheeks, unaccustomed tears, which he felt were like drops of blood from his very heart. "No, no! For what is the Beresford honor compared to justice? And justice shall be done! Your honest name shall be restored, the guilty man made to suffer, though he were thrice a Beresford! Johnnie, little Johnnie Ward!" His voice sank to a whisper. "You shall hold your brave head up among men once more before you die!"

The clawlike fingers gripped his.

"No, no, no!" he said. "No. You must not, you dare not——"

He began to choke helplessly. His mother sprang up, and ran to his side, and held him in her arms, where he lay, almost rent apart by the terrible paroxysm.

"'Tis the excitement is bad for him," she said, half-apologetically to the Judge. "The doctor told me to be careful of that. 'Tis the second one he's had since he came home."

The Judge stood, his face turned away, his ears filled with that strangling, fearful sound, which no one who has heard it can ever forget. And when it ceased at last, and the poor boy lay back almost senseless upon the couch, he turned to the distressed mother.

"What have you to feed him on, to strengthen him?" he asked. "What do you give him, after an attack like this?"

"Father Walsh brought me a bottle of cordial this morning, and he said something about having a doctor come in this afternoon. Doctors can't help my laddie very much now, Judge Beresford."

"No," said Judge Beresford. "No. But

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we may be able to prolong life a little—if that is possible, it shall be done—rest assured.” The boy’s ears could hear no word of their conversation now, only the murmur of their voices. “You are his mother,” he went on rapidly, “was it fair to him, or to yourself to allow this to go on? Why did you not tell me—you?”

“Your honor, we thought you knew.”

A groan burst from Judge Beresford’s throat.

“God help me!” he said. “That is the cruelest part of all—you thought I knew!”

“And for nine long years you did for my man what none other but yourself would ever think of doing,” she went on rapidly. “If we could pay you back——”

“Don’t, Mrs. Ward—I—I can’t stand any more. I thought I could, but I can’t. I’m going to send you help for Johnnie—it’s all I can do, now. But to think I knew, to think I knew!”

He left her, standing on the steps staring after him. He did not look back again. In his eyes just then the Beresford honor seemed a very paltry thing indeed—nothing, a bubble compared to the hideous crime which had been committed. That boy’s

strangling cough would sound in his ears on his death-bed. He could never forget it. It was the price that had been paid to save the miserable Beresford honor.

"It was not gratitude—it was suicide," he told himself. "John Ward has deliberately killed himself for my sake."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE FOUNDATION STONE

**I**T was fully an hour before the Beresford machine drove slowly up to the wide entrance gate. Judge Beresford, upstairs in his study, where he had been sitting with folded hands, staring into space, heard the bustle which proclaimed the arrival of these newcomers to his home. He rose at once; it was his duty to welcome them, and he would do his duty.

No one saw anything odd in his demeanor as he went down, clasped hands with Louise Duchard, the faithful, kissed the white, wan cheek his brother's wife held up to his caress, and smiled at the blue-eyed baby who looked out shyly upon a strange world from the safe shelter of Louise Duchard's strong arms. Mrs. Beresford had left orders before she went out, and the rooms they were to occupy were ready and waiting for them, and to these they went at once, leaving Anne

and Dr. Holmes and Judge Beresford together.

"Mrs. Beresford has taken tremendously to the baby and its mother," said Dr. Holmes. "And the little woman will soon recover—there is no organic trouble at all. She needs Beresford Court, and Anne, and lots of sunshine. I think we brought more strength with us just by putting in an appearance than all the medicine she could take for six months would give her."

"Your duties are not over for the day, however," said Judge Beresford. "I want you to visit another patient: John Ward."

"Anne and I——"

"Anne must stay here. I want you to go in the car, and come back as soon as you can. I want a complete report, doctor—what chances there are for length of life, where I can send him, what I can do now, under present conditions, until he's strong enough to be moved. I've just been to see him," he added. "I thought he'd die while I was there—but you'll know more about that than I. You won't mind me sending you off like this?"

"Duty before pleasure, always," said Dr. Holmes.

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"Come upstairs with me, Anne," said Judge Beresford.

"I think we've found the missing prophecy cross—the second one," said Anne, as she followed Judge Beresford into the room. "That cross belonged to Norma's mother, Louise says, and she always treasured it as an old family heirloom. That will be an odd thing—to think that the missing cross turns up in the possession of David Beresford's wife."

"Yes," said Judge Beresford. "But never mind the cross now." He fastened his eyes on her keenly. "Anne, why didn't you tell me about Johnnie Ward? Why didn't you give me an inkling of the truth?"

Anne looked at him, perplexed.

"Of what truth, Judge Beresford?"

"That he was innocent."

"Innocent! He *is* innocent, then?"

"You didn't know it?"

"How should I know it? I liked to believe in your belief in him—but it seemed too impossible. There was no one else——"

"Yes, Anne, there *was* some one else."

Her face slowly paled.

"Not——"

"Yes—David."

"Who told you?"

"David himself. And, Anne—*they thought I knew!*—David told them that I knew. So Johnnie took the blame, and she allowed it, to save the Beresford honor. Ah! The Beresford honor has had a blow to-day from which it will never recover."

Anne's tender look of sympathy was turned upon him now.

"At first I feared that you, also, might have some knowledge of this dreadful thing—but I see you did not. I am glad—at least you ring true, you and Mary. It is good to find one or two dependable people in this world."

There was nothing Anne could say to combat the note of melancholy in his low tones.

"Anne, I am at the end of everything for a while. I feel as if I have no ambition, no desire to do anything. I think I will take Mary and go away, until I can shake off this horrible sensation. But before I do that, I must proclaim John Ward's innocence—his name must be cleared!"

"Oh!" said Anne. She knew what these words cost him—this man so proud of his noble house.

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"It will only be a nine-days' wonder. Worse things have happened," said Judge Beresford.

"True," said Anne. "But never to a Beresford."

"I want no honor at the price of another man's misery," said Judge Beresford, almost fiercely. "I could scarcely forgive—before—and now! Now I shall never forgive! He has tarnished our name——"

"Don't!" said Anne gently. "No one is perfect—and no man can judge another."

"One Beresford can judge another," he answered. "But there is one terrible question which comes ever before my brain. He is only a little more than half of my age—his training has been practically in my hands. Am I to blame? Is it through my leniency that he, whom I have loved so, has committed so much evil? He has been reared honestly, as all men of his name and blood should be reared. With the traditions of his race held ever before his eyes—their virtues for his emulation, their faults for his warning——"

Anne did not reply. Nor did her eyes meet his.

"What more was there to be done? What

else could I have given him? Tell me, Anne. You are silent—yes, silent. Is it possible that you blame me?”

“No,” said Anne, “you have been an honorable, upright gentleman all your life. You have given him everything that a human being could give—love, tenderness, and a good example. But the one thing necessary you did not give him.”

“Anne!” he exclaimed. “Anne!”

“I mean it,” she said. “It is that of which you are depriving Neil—your wife, through prejudice and prejudice only. Religion.”

He made a gesture, half-scorn, half-dis-sent, and turned aside. Anne’s eyes kindled.

“I don’t want to make this a religious discussion—but you have put the question to me fairly, and I shall answer it. David has had everything the human heart can crave with one exception—God. He has never been taught to bow to the power of a Superior Being. He has followed but one important doctrine—‘Do as you like, but don’t be found out.’”

Judge Beresford was silent, but he could feel the intensity of her gaze.

“David has seen the good things of the

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world being enjoyed by other people—what was to prevent him wishing to enjoy them? Money procures immunity from most evils, even disgrace. He was conscious of owing no debt to any one but himself——”

“He owed a debt to his house, and to me——”

“If one is apparently honorable, apparently a credit to one’s name and house and people—if one can do wrong and hide it—what then?”

“The moral wrong——”

“God is morality. Men can’t base morality on any foundation save God. And without a foundation the strongest building will totter to the ground. I must do right, not because I have honorable ancestors, a worthy name, not because I trace my people back centuries—but because God has commanded it. Forgive me!” She broke off, penitently. “Oh, I didn’t mean to talk to you like this—I forgot myself! Please forgive me?”

“Yes, Anne—there is nothing to forgive.”

“There is,” she said. “I shouldn’t talk so—but the thing has been so on my mind—Rosalie, David, everything. I have been wondering and pondering all day—asking

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myself why, even as you are doing, and finding only *my* answer, as you must find yours."

"We all must find our own answer, Anne," he said, looking at her strangely. "You are fortunate, for my question to me is still a question."

Anne said no more, and after a few more remarks, chiefly about Norma Beresford, and her baby, she rose and left the room.

Dr. Holmes, when he came back from the Ward cottage, had no word of hope to give. It would be death to move the boy, he said. He might live a week—but his lungs were practically gone. So the Judge ordered a big tent thrown up in the prettiest and coolest part of Beresford woods, and here, screened in to avoid all insect discomfort, the boy remained outdoors. Mr. Howard, following hasty instructions, saw the Italian nobleman in the Amsterdam. He gave up the cross at once when he learned it had been stolen, and the bauble was restored to Luke Beresford's possession.

Some two or three days after David's last confession, the full account of the theft and John Ward's innocent suffering appeared in the daily papers. It was a hard blow to the

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stately owner of Beresford Court, but to his keen sense of fair play it would have been harder to conceal it. Poor John Ward, in whose frail body the taper of life was flickering with unwonted energy—the last spurt of the flame before its final extinguishment—wept bitterly when he read the account which laid low the honor of the Beresfords, even though it exalted him and his sacrifice.

"It's nearly over," he said to the Judge, who spent hours with him every day. "There's men and women suffering a thousand times more unjustly than I—I feel now as if I've been deprived of some privilege. You'll not forget that it was against my wish that you told it all?"

"No, Johnnie, I'll not forget, my poor, foolish boy, who should be, to-day, the strong staff of his mother's declining years."

"Oh, but you'll take care of her, Judge."

"Indeed I will, Johnnie. Tell old John Ward that, too, when you see him."

"He knows it—he knows it," said the boy, with the light of great faith shining in his sunken eyes.

It was hard for Judge Beresford to become reconciled to the presence of David's

wife and child. He could not unbend from the sternness in which he wrapped himself, and through which even his wife and Neil, the beloved, could not penetrate. But among them all Louise Duchard was ecstatically happy. It mattered not to her that the Judge was grieving over his brother's disgrace. She cared little that David Beresford was a wanderer on the face of the earth. She only saw the pink tint creeping to the cheeks of her little mistress, saw the gentle caresses which Mary Beresford bestowed upon David's beautiful child, and was content. Mary Beresford could have the little Lolita and welcome; Louise loved the baby well enough, but it was Norma to whom she clung with the rare devotion of her type. When all was well with Norma there could be nothing much wrong with any one else.

Rosalie's love affair progressed rapidly. Father Walsh had said rightly when he surmised that Mother de Chantal would make it her special care. She would not have her Rosalie married to a heretic—therefore Harvey Birdsall must give up his heresy, if there lay any power in the clear vision of eyes that knew the world right well. Rosalie,

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when she heard that Anne was to have a Christmas wedding, told Mother de Chantal that it would be romantic if she and Harvey could be married at the same time. Mother de Chantal said nothing—then. Later, however, Rosalie told her that she had made up her mind that a June wedding would be much prettier—to which Mother de Chantal agreed unhesitatingly.

Judge Beresford had the opportunity of assisting at a truly Catholic deathbed about a month later, for John Ward lingered that long, and it was after Thanksgiving when he died. By this time the Judge had become more accustomed to Norma and the little one, and could face with equanimity the thought of losing Anne—even though Anne was only going as far away as Avona, and most of her time would be spent at Beresford Court. After Anne's wedding, he and Mrs. Beresford, with Norma, Louise, and the little one, were going South for a brief trip—until Anne came home, at any rate. But a conversation which ensued between husband and wife the night after Johnnie Ward's beautiful death showed that all the occurrences of the past two months had not been without their effect. They were seated

together at the window of the study, talking over affairs as Judge Beresford had not been able to do with his wife in many years. But Mary Beresford seemed to have taken a new lease of life. There was scarcely a sign of her old hysterical weakness.

"It seems odd," she said musingly, "that the prophecy has been actually fulfilled! The cross disappeared and has been united to its fellow. And——"

She hesitated.

"At a great cost to Beresford," said her husband in a low tone.

"Yes," she answered, "a great cost—but greatest of all to you."

A silence rested between them. The Judge's eyes, dark with pain, were turned toward the window.

"I've been thinking a long time, Mollie dearest, of a certain topic which I'd like to discuss with you," he said at last. "But I've never had the chance."

"Yes, Luke," she answered.

"There are a few questions I want to ask—and the reason I haven't asked them is because you may feel they would hurt me—the truth, I mean. Don't be afraid now to say just what you feel, Mollie."

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"Why, Luke, dear, of course not. There's no further trouble?"

"None—none at all." He paused an instant as if lost in thought. "Mollie, if I were to die—if anything were to happen to me within a week—now, wait, I'm not sick, I have no concealed illness, I am as strong, if not stronger than I ever was in my life. But if, as I say, I were to die to-morrow, what would be the first important step you would take without me?"

Mrs. Beresford looked at him anxiously. Then she smiled.

"You're not sick, you're not going to die; so why say that to me?"

"Because I can't ask it in any other way. Would you go on living as you are living now?"

Her under-lip quivered a little.

"My dear, you won't refuse to answer me?"

"No, Luke—I'll answer you. I would *not* go on as I am living now. You are well aware of the one thing I crave—for you and Neil and myself." She drew a deep breath. "But we've had trouble enough together—you have suffered enough through me. Do not fear."

"You want to be a Catholic—you want to bring Neil up a Catholic?"

"I desire it as intensely as I once craved the gift of Neil himself."

"And the price?"

"Twice over would I be willing to pay the price," she said in a low tone. "But you are my husband, Luke; my dear, good husband."

"Then it would give you happiness if I told you that I consented?"

"Luke!" Her fingers tightened on his arm. "I can't believe it possible. Luke, are you sure?"

"Yes, dear. I shall no longer stand in your way."

"And you——"

"Leave me out of it, Mollie. I have no conviction, no inclination. But if you and Neil care, I shall withdraw my opposition."

"But why——" began Mrs. Beresford.

"I don't know. It was talking to Anne, I think. She said a few things in relation to David that made me think. Those things I should have known from my own experience, but she drew the veil from my eyes."

"Oh, Luke, if only you, too——"

"No, dear, not I. Be satisfied."

"I am, I am. But it is so sweet, so con-

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soling! There is so much in it, for the head as well as the heart. If only you understood!"

"I shall not dispute with you. I don't know anything about it."

She looked at him sadly.

"I know well, my dear husband, the frightful years of anxiety I have given you, and what my health has cost you in every way. I want to do this—to become a Catholic more than I want anything else in the world, but I don't want anything to estrange you from me. God understands my feeling, my heart. Luke, will you, afterward, let me try to show you the reasons why this belief has taken such a hold on me? See, I am not asking you to come—only to listen."

"That isn't much to ask," said Judge Beresford smiling. Drawing her head to his shoulder he kissed her on the forehead.

"Long ago when Neil was born, little Mrs. Ward knelt the whole night in prayer asking that my life be spared," said Mrs. Beresford musingly. "To-night—who knows?—the soul of her husband and her boy may be offering petitions for us in the visible presence of Him who now we can only see by the eyes of faith."

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"God grant it," said Judge Beresford, and a mist swam before his eyes. "God grant it, Mollie, dear!"

"And guide even erring David's steps at this very hour, wherever he may be."

The Judge did not speak for a moment. His eyes wandered to the patch of woods, where, white as snow amid the now bare trees, poor Johnnie Ward's tent had shone up at him whenever he stood before this window. Then, raising her hand to his lips, reverently, he said:

"Amen!"

THE END

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